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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

UNION SEMINARY AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

A CHAPTER SUPPLEMENTARY TO "FIFTY YEARS OF THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

BY

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NOTE.

The following paper, prepared last summer, is now published in the hope that it may serve to correct some misapprehensions, which have widely prevailed with regard to the Union Theological Seminary in its relations to the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Church.

New York, October 24, 1891.

THE AGREEMENT OF 1870

BETWEEN UNION SEMINARY AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

A CHAPTER SUPPLEMENTARY TO

"FIFTY YEARS OF THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK."

In the historical address delivered at the semi-centenary of Union Seminary, in 1886, there was only a passing allusion to this agreement. Nor had it attracted any special attention until early in the present year. Then, all at once, it began to be discussed in the religious newspapers; at first mildly and somewhat hesitatingly, but later in a very earnest and positive manner. As the meeting of the General Assembly drew near, the motive of this discussion became apparent. The agreement of 1870, as interpreted by the opponents of Dr. Briggs in the Presbyterian Church, gave the General Assembly power to forbid his transfer to the new chair of Biblical Theology; and no sooner had the Assembly actually met than its purpose to exercise this power was unmistakable. On the 29th of May it disapproved of Dr. Briggs' transfer by an overwhelming vote. This action of the General Assembly of 1891, whether regarded in its bearing upon the Presbyterian Church or upon the Union Seminary, is fraught with consequences of the utmost importance. In the following paper I propose to consider the subject in this twofold bearing; and I shall try to do so without passion or prejudice. A better understanding of

the whole subject will help, perhaps, to allay some of the passions and prejudices which unhappily its discussion has aroused. My aim will be to set forth, as clearly and succinctly as possible, the main points which seem to me to be involved in the controversy, and thus to aid those whose minds are not yet fully made up, in reaching a just conclusion.

I.

ACTION OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON REUNION WITH REGARD TO THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES.

The question of the Theological Seminaries was one of the most difficult and perplexing with which the Joint Committee, appointed in 1866, had to deal. This was owing partly to the nature of the subject, and in part to the great diversity of origin, constitution, environment, and legal relations which marked these institutions.

The 9th Article of "the proposed terms of reunion between the two branches of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America," reported by the chairmen, Drs. Beatty and Adams, to their respective Assemblies, in May, 1867, was as follows:

> If at any time, after the union has been effected, any of the theological seminaries under the care and control of the General Assembly, shall desire to put themselves under synodical control, they shall be permitted to do so at the request of their Boards of Directors; and those seminaries which are independent in their organization shall have the privilege of putting themselves under ecclesiastical control, to the end that, if practicable, a system of ecclesiastical supervision of such institutions may ultimately prevail through the entire united Church.

The 9th Article, as reported by the Joint Committee and

adopted by the two General Assemblies in 1868, varied somewhat from this. It was as follows:

In order to a uniform system of ecclesiastical supervision those theological seminaries that are now under Assembly control may, if their Boards of Direction so elect, be transferred to the watch and care of one or more of the adjacent synods, and the other seminaries are advised to introduce, as far as may be, into their constitutions, the principle of Synodical or Assembly supervision; in which case they shall be entitled to an official recognition and approbation on the part of the General Assembly.

The changes in the Article are highly significant, and indicate several points of objection made to it as reported in 1867. This amended Article reappeared among the "Concurrent Declarations" of the General Assemblies of 1869. In explaining it in their report of 1868, the chairmen said:

A recommendation looking to some uniformity of ecclesiastical supervision, is all which the Committee felt to be within their province or that of the Assembly; except that those seminaries, now belonging to either branch of the Church, should have every guarantee and protection for their chartered rights which they might desire.

This passage, both in its mild, even subdued, tone, and in its explanation, throws a clear light back upon the devious path by which the Committee had reached their conclusion. The discussion and criticism occasioned by their plan, as reported in 1867, had convinced them that the whole subject was beset with difficulties and perils, which required very delicate as well as skillful treatment. "*A recommendation*" (the italics are their own) "looking to some uniformity of ecclesiastical supervision, is all which the Committee felt to be within their province or that of the Assembly"; except that the "*chartered rights*" of all the seminaries of either

branch of the Church, should be *carefully guaranteed* and *protected*. This was quite different language from that used in 1867: "Those seminaries which are independent in their organization, shall *have the* PRIVILEGE *of putting themselves under ecclesiastical control.*"

The temper of mind, as also the way, in which the Joint Committee and the friends of reunion generally had come to regard the question of the theological seminaries, may be seen most distinctly, perhaps, in the speech of Rev. George W. Musgrave, D.D., LL.D., made on the occasion of the presentation of the report of the Joint Committee of Conference to the Old School General Assembly sitting in the Brick Church in the city of New York, May 27, 1869. No one who heard it is likely ever to forget that speech or the remarkable old man who made it. A few extracts will indicate its spirit and its bearing on the question now under discussion. Its opening sentences are as follows:

It affords me great pleasure to be able to report a plan of union between what are known as the Old and New School bodies, and to be able to say that our report is *unanimous*, and is signed by every member of each Committee. The Joint Committee report three papers to the Assembly. The *first* is a plan of union, containing the basis, which will be sent down to the presbyteries for their acceptance or rejection. The *second* paper is a *declaration*, made that there may be a good understanding between the two branches. This paper is not a *compact* or *covenant*, but it is a *recommendation* of certain arrangements as to seminaries, boards, etc. It is no part of the basis or terms of union. It only recommends certain arrangements as suitable to be adopted. The *third* paper is one recommending a day of prayer to Almighty God for His guidance and presence, that presbyteries may be under Divine influence when they come to vote upon this momentous question.

In the course of his speech Dr. Musgrave thus referred to the "concurrent declarations" on theological seminaries, boards, and other matters pertaining to the interests of the Church, when it should become united:

I have already stated to the Assembly that these articles don't form a part of the basis. They are not a compact or covenant, but they suggest to the Assembly what are suitable arrangements. I will not repeat what I have said, except to call your attention to that important distinction. They are not terms of the union. They may be amended or modified, as any future Assembly may deem proper. We told our brethren that we were unwilling to tie the future hands of the Church of God; and I, for one, was very decided on that point. And I will say to you that I would have risked the failure of this union at the present time, rather than concede that these articles should be unchangeable, though I cannot foresee that there will be any necessity in the future to change them. I am neither a prophet, nor the son of a prophet; but I think I have some little common sense, and I felt that it would be unsafe for us to imperil the future by trammeling the Church of God, preventing it from exercising its liberty, and from dealing with circumstances as they might arise in the providence of God. Sir, we were very decided and determined that those articles should not form a part of the compact, but that they should be suggestions and recommendations, in order that the presbyteries should get an understanding between the parties. But, sir, it is due to fairness that I should say, and I repeat it now publicly in order that it may have a response from this house, we did say to these brethren, "We will not consent to make these articles a covenant. We won't adopt them as a legal compact, binding upon the future; yet we are acting in good faith and as honorable men, and we say to you that we will not change them at any future time without obviously good and sufficient reasons."

It is needless to add, that the wisdom of proposing and adopting these articles in the sense not of a legal compact, but of judicious, suitable arrangements, very soon became apparent. Dr. Musgrave's expressions, "We told our brethren," "We did say to these brethren," refer to the New School brethren, and are explained by the following extract from a sketch of "The Assemblies of 1869," written by the Rev. Dr. M. W. Jacobus, Moderator of the Old School Assembly:

It may be mentioned, as part of the inside history of the negotiations, that when the Joint Sub-Committee met for the purpose of engrossing what had been passed upon by the Joint Committee of Conference, and to prepare the report to the Assembly, one of the members (N. S.) objected to the insertion of the words contained in the preamble to the concurrent declarations, viz.: "not as articles of compact or covenant, but as in their judgment proper and equitable arrangements." He admitted that the language fairly expressed what had been agreed upon, that the articles referred to were merely recommended, and if adopted by the united Church might hereafter, for good and sufficient reasons, be modified or repealed. But he argued that the insertion of the words above referred to would make the impression that the articles are ephemeral, and would have a tendency to invite change. There was force in the objection. But to this it was well replied, that the words ought to be inserted: 1. Because they fairly express our mutual good understandings. 2. Because, if omitted, *it might be hereafter argued that the articles were intended to be a compact between the two parties, which could not be honorably modified or repealed.* 3. Because it was held to be in the highest degree important that the united Church should be left entirely free to adapt itself to any changes which, in the future development of Providence, might be deemed either necessary or expedient. This difference threatened to be a stumbling-block in the

way, even within reach of the goal. At this very crisis, however, an eminent layman of the New School committee joined in this view of the case, with such cogent reasons as to prove the correctness of the position. Upon re-examination of the paragraph, the dissent was revoked, and the entire paper was then adopted by a unanimous vote. This meeting of the Joint Sub-Committee was held on the evening preceding the day of presenting the report to the General Assembly, and it was not until eleven o'clock at night that the decisive vote was reached in the committee-room.

II.

THE VETO IN THE ELECTION OF ITS PROFESSORS AS CONCEDED BY UNION SEMINARY TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

We come now to a main object of this paper, the occasion, meaning, and force of the veto power offered and given to the General Assembly in 1870 by Union Seminary. I have shown what was the action of the Joint Committee respecting the theological seminaries up to the time of the reunion. As the result of long and patient consideration, aided by varied discussion throughout the two Churches, the ninth article, or concurrent declaration, already given, had been reported to the General Assemblies and adopted by both bodies. This article was a "recommendation" and nothing more. So the case stood, when the first General Assembly of the united Church met at Philadelphia, in May, 1870. The work of this Assembly was principally one of readjustment and reconstruction. The articles approved by the two Assemblies at New York in 1869, not as a part of the basis of union, or as a legal compact, but as "suitable arrangements," were now to be acted upon. The varying, not to say more or less conflicting, institutions, legal rights, customs, agencies, properties,

and activities of both branches, Old School and New, now no longer two but one, were all to be brought into harmonious relations, in accordance with the changed order of things and the new organic life. I was a member of the Assembly of 1870, and can testify, as an eye-witness, that its ruling spirit, from beginning to end, was the spirit, not of fear, or suspicion, or jealousy, or any such thing, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind. The presence of the sturdiest, foremost opponent of reunion, Dr. Charles Hodge, if not as a commissioner, yet as a most interested looker-on and even friendly adviser, along with the beautiful tribute of high regard and affection paid by New and Old School men alike to Albert Barnes, then about to pass to his great reward, happily symbolized this spirit.

As might have been anticipated, William Adams was placed at the head of the standing committee on theological seminaries. As chairman of the New School part of the joint committee on reunion, he had won the confidence and admiration of the whole Church, alike by his wisdom, his Christian temper, his felicitous addresses, and his masterly reports. One of his colleagues on the committee, the late beloved Dr. Shaw, of Rochester, wrote to him: "The Church owes to you so large a debt that no one but God is rich enough to pay it." But inasmuch as all the theological seminaries connected with the Assembly belonged to the Old School, Dr. Adams felt that delicacy forbade his acting as chairman of the committee on that subject. He, therefore, as a personal favor, asked permission to decline the appointment, suggesting Dr. John C. Backus in his place. But the Assembly insisted that he should serve.

"I think," said Dr. Musgrave, himself a director of Princeton, "the moderator has shown his wisdom in appointing a man so entirely acceptable to all this house. We have no rivalship, no jealousies, no fear, but perfect

confidence and love, and the Old School men would rather Dr. Adams should be in that position, because he was once a New School man. We have this additional evidence that we are one." *

And now, before proceeding further, let us return to Union Seminary and the veto power offered by it to the General Assembly in the election of its professors. In order to present the subject more clearly, I will touch briefly upon several points bearing on it.

(*a*). *Origin and design of Union Theological Seminary.*

The Union Theological Seminary was intended not only to be a new school of divinity, but also, as such, to represent a distinct type of religious thought, sentiment, and policy. It differed in important respects from Andover, from Princeton, and from Auburn. It was largely the growth at once of the fervid evangelistic spirit of the time, and of that devotion to the cause of sacred science and a learned ministry, which marked all the churches of Puritan origin. In establishing it, the founders, who were earnest, practical men, aimed to embody in a permanent form certain views of Christian piety and theological training, which they regarded as specially fitted to prepare young men for effective service in the ministry of the Gospel in their own age. And in carrying out these views, they took pains to organize the institution on a plan in harmony with them. While providing carefully for sound Scriptural

* These two eminent leaders of the Assembly at Philadelphia early attracted the attention of spectators in the galleries, who by way of characterizing their peculiar traits, jokingly named Dr. Musgrave "Old Unanimous," and Dr. Adams "Old Magnanimous." See a letter of Rev. Dr. T. L. Cuyler in *The Evangelist*, written at the time, in which is a graphic pen-picture of the Assembly of 1870.

teaching, and avowing also their adherence to Presbyterian doctrines and polity, they at the same time resolved to give the Seminary perfect freedom and self-control in the management of its own affairs. This was doubtless the result in part of providential circumstances; but it was none the less a result of deliberate conviction and purpose. Their noble temper of mind, their large, world-wide outlook, and the sacredness they attached to their work, may be seen in the preamble to the constitution of the Seminary. Here are portions of it:

That the design of the founders of this Seminary may be publicly known, and be sacredly regarded by the directors, professors, and students, it is judged proper to make the following preliminary statement:

A number of Christians, both clergymen and laymen, in the cities of New York and Brooklyn, deeply impressed with the claims of the world upon the Church of Christ, to furnish a competent supply of well-educated and pious ministers of the Gospel; impressed also with the inadequacy of all existing means for this purpose; and believing that large cities furnish many peculiar facilities and advantages for conducting theological education; having, after several meetings for consultation and prayer, again convened on the 18th of January, A.D. 1836, unanimously adopted the following resolution and declarations:

1. *Resolved*, In humble dependence on the grace of God, to attempt the establishment of a theological seminary in the city of New York.

2. In this institution it is the design of the founders to furnish the means of a full and thorough education in all the subjects taught in the best theological seminaries in this or other countries.

3. Being fully persuaded that vital godliness, a thorough education, and practical training in the works of benevolence and pastoral labor are all essential to meet the wants and

promote the best interests of the kingdom of Christ, the founders of this seminary design that its students, remaining under pastoral influence, and performing the duties of church members in the several churches to which they belong, or with which they worship, in prayer-meetings, in the instruction of Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes, and being conversant with all the benevolent efforts of the present day in this great community, shall have the opportunity of adding to solid learning and true piety the teachings of experience.

4. By the foregoing advantages, the founders hope and expect, with the blessing of God, to call forth and enlist in the service of Christ and in the work of the ministry, genius, talent, enlightened piety, and missionary zeal; and to qualify many for the labors and management of the various religious institutions, seminaries of learning, and enterprises of benevolence which characterize the present times.

The founders of Union Seminary were at the time mostly pastors or members of churches, nearly all of which, after the disruption, sided with the New School branch. Of the clerical directors in the first board, one only adhered to the Old School, and he had recently come from a Congregational pastorate in New England. Of the first lay directors, also, nearly all belonged to the New School. The founders of the Seminary were in hearty sympathy with Albert Barnes, Lyman Beecher, and men of that stamp. They were enthusiastic believers in the new Christian evangelism at home and abroad. They believed also in the "voluntary principle," and were exceedingly jealous of all "high-toned" ecclesiasticism. They hated religious quarrels and bickerings. Their sentiments on these and similar points led to the establishment of the Seminary, found expression in its constitution, and have shaped its policy from that day to this. Here is their own

account of the matter, written by that admirable man, Erskine Mason, son of the friend of Hamilton, the renowned Dr. John M. Mason:

It is the design of the founders to provide a theological seminary in the midst of the greatest and most growing community in America, around which all men of moderate views and feelings, who desire to live free from party strife, and to stand aloof from all extremes of doctrinal speculation, practical radicalism, and ecclesiastical domination, may cordially and affectionately rally.

To keep clear of all extremes of "ecclesiastical domination," they made the Seminary independent alike of Presbytery, of Synod, and of General Assembly. Its autonomy was complete and unquestioned. Nothing could be more cordial than were its relations with the New School Church. It made annual reports and statements to the General Assembly touching its affairs: the elections, transfers, and deaths of its professors; its successive endowments, and all things of general interest. But the Assembly had no proprietorship or control over it. The whole Church was proud of Union Seminary, and the Seminary loved and honored the Presbyterian Church. This happy state of things continued until 1870. Why was it then changed?

(*b*). *Reasons and influences that induced Union Seminary, in* 1870, *to give up a portion of its autonomy.*

1. First of all, it was done in the hope of furthering thereby the harmony and prosperity of the Presbyterian Church. Reunion had been already accomplished, and Union Seminary had from the first thrown the whole weight of its influence in favor of the movement. Henry B. Smith had struck its keynote, and, later, in a contest of the pen, had met and vanquished its ablest foe. Dr. Shedd,

in the General Assembly at Albany, in 1868, had vindicated the cause of reunion, and at the same time the orthodoxy of the New School against the charges of Drs. Charles and A. A. Hodge, Dr. Breckinridge, and other Princeton and Old School leaders. Their colleague, Thomas H. Skinner, a very eminent New School leader, was in heartiest sympathy with them; while William Adams, Jonathan F. Stearns, and Edwin F. Hatfield, all directors of Union, had been among the most active members of the Joint Committee. Such ardent friends of reunion as William E. Dodge, Charles Butler, Richard T. Haines, and other noted laymen, also belonged to the Union Board. It was altogether natural, therefore, that Union Seminary should have felt deeply interested in removing, as far as possible, all obstacles to the complete success of reunion out of the way. Dr. Adams was especially anxious that the wheels of the great Church organization, whose strength was now doubled, and which he believed to be fraught with vast power for good, should move right on without friction. He wielded at this time a greater influence than any other director of Union Seminary, greater perhaps than any other minister of the Presbyterian Church. He was the man of all others to appeal to in taking hold of the "plan" of 1870. These are some of the general considerations and motives which led him to propose and the directors of Union Seminary to adopt that plan.

2. But the question here arises, why precisely such a plan, differing so materially from that recommended by the General Assemblies of 1869, should have been proposed? In the plan recommended by the General Assemblies, it will be noticed, no mention was made of a veto in the election of professors. The Old School seminaries might, if their boards of direction desired it, be transferred from Assembly control to the watch and care of one or

more of the adjacent synods; while the New School seminaries were "advised" to introduce, as far as might be, into their constitutions the principle of synodical or Assembly supervision.

Neither of these recommendations was followed. No Old School seminary was transferred from the control of the General Assembly to the watch and care of one or more of the adjacent synods. Nor did Union Seminary introduce into its "constitution" the principle of synodical or Assembly supervision. This shows what good reason Dr. Musgrave had for saying that the "concurrent declarations" lacked entirely the binding force or quality of a "legal compact," and it shows also that, with all their uncommon ability and wisdom, and after years of deliberation, the Joint Committee had recommended what was altogether impracticable. Between the great ratification meeting at Pittsburgh in November, 1869, and the meeting at Philadelphia in May, 1870, it had become perfectly clear that Princeton—I confine myself at present mainly to this seminary—could not be released from Assembly control, and put itself under the watch and care of one or more of the adjacent synods, without imperilling its endowments. In this dilemma Union Seminary was urged to come to the help of Princeton; nor did there seem to be any other way of relief. The appeal was based largely upon a strong conviction, common to the wisest and best friends of both seminaries, that the election of professors by the General Assembly was open to serious objections, and would be open to graver objections in the future.

At the founding of Princeton in 1812 the Presbyterian Church was a small body, numerically and territorially, and the selection of theological teachers could very properly be intrusted to the knowledge and discretion of its General Assembly. The choice of the first professors of

Princeton—those very admirable types of Presbyterian piety, wisdom, and learning, Samuel Miller and Archibald Alexander—was, doubtless, the best possible. But in 1870 the Presbyterian Church had increased enormously both in numbers and extent; it covered the continent; and its branches reached to the uttermost parts of the earth. Even then in exceptional cases, no doubt, the General Assembly could judge as well as any board of directors who was best qualified for this or that chair of instruction—but only in exceptional cases. As a rule, the General Assembly was every year becoming less fitted to exercise this difficult function.

The point is so important in its bearing on the matter under discussion, that I will enforce my position by that of men whose opinions respecting it are entitled to special weight. Here is an extract from a letter of Dr. A. A. Hodge, written late in 1867:

> It is proper, it is almost a necessity, that each institution should be left in the management of those upon whose support it exclusively depends. The majority of any Assembly must be necessarily ignorant of the special wants and local conditions of any seminary, and of the qualifications of candidates proposed for its chairs of instruction. The best of these are generally young men, up to the time of their nomination known only to a few. To vest the choice in the General Assembly will tend to put prominent ecclesiastics into such positions, rather than scholars, or men specially qualified with gifts for teaching. As the population of our country becomes larger and more heterogeneous, and the General Assembly increases proportionably, the difficulties above mentioned, and many others easily thought of, will increase.

Dr. Henry B. Smith, to whom this letter was addressed,

thus expressed his own view in noticing some of the objections to the Joint Committee's report of 1867:

The plan allows those seminaries that are now under the Assembly to remain so, or if they choose, to put themselves instead under synodical supervision; and it recommends the seminaries not under ecclesiastical supervision to attain unto that condition; but does not insist on this—as of course it could not. It is a fair and serious question, whether a General Assembly, representing the Presbyterian Church throughout the whole United States, especially in view of the numbers in that Church, and the extent of the territory in twenty or thirty years, will be the best, or even a suitable body, to choose the professors and manage the concerns of all the Presbyterian seminaries scattered throughout the country. We very much doubt whether this would be a wise arrangement. It may work well in Scotland, but Scotland has its limits. *It might bring into the Assembly local, personal, and theological questions, which it would be better to settle in a narrower field.*

The following strong expression of opinion, written by Dr. Adams, is from the memorial itself of the directors of Union Theological Seminary to the General Assembly:

It has appeared to many, and especially to those who took an active part in founding the Union Theological Seminary, that there are many disadvantages, infelicities, not to say at times perils, in the election of professors of the theological seminaries directly and immediately by the General Assembly itself,—a body so large, in session for so short a time, and composed of members to so great an extent resident at a distance from the seminaries themselves, and therefore personally unacquainted with many things which pertain to their true interests and usefulness.

It is noteworthy that in this memorial of the directors of Union Seminary, offering a veto in the election of its

professors, two reasons only are assigned; namely, first a desire, as was said before, of doing all in their power to establish confidence and harmony throughout the whole Church; and, in the second place, a desire to secure to the Old School seminaries, in which those of the New School were henceforth to have a common interest, the privilege, so highly prized by themselves, of choosing professors in each institution by its own board of directors, instead of having them chosen in every case by the General Assembly. On these two grounds the memorial of the board of directors of Union Seminary was chiefly based. These two considerations the friends of Princeton appealed to with great force, when urging Dr. Adams to give them aid in their dilemma.

It was stated at Detroit that prior to the meeting of the Assembly of 1870, "Dr. Adams conferred with and fully submitted his plan to his friends at Princeton, who opened their arms and hearts to receive him, and they promptly responded to every one of his suggestions." *

This needs to be supplemented by the additional statement that his friends at Princeton submitted to him their plan, and that he promptly responded to their suggestions. It was no doubt in response to their suggestion that his original plan gave to the General Assembly a veto in the election of *directors*, as well as of professors. Had that way of solving the problem of the theological seminaries originated with Dr. Adams, he would almost certainly have proposed it during the troublesome negotiations on this subject, which ran on for nearly three years prior to the reunion. There is no intimation that he did anything of the sort. And yet the point had been made, again and again,

* Remarks of John J. McCook, a Commissioner from the Presbytery of New York, pp. 3.

by Old School opponents of the terms of reunion, as proposed by the Joint Committee in their report to the Assemblies of 1867, that the seminaries of both branches of the Church ought in fairness to be placed on a footing of "perfect equality." Why, it was said, should the Old School institutions continue to be subject to the full control of the General Assembly, the New School coming in for an equal share in its exercise, while two at least of the New School institutions continued under what Dr. A. A. Hodge, in a letter to Professor Smith, called "self-perpetuated and irresponsible boards of trustees." Such was the reasoning of opponents of the Joint Committee's report of 1867. Indeed so strong was the feeling and contention of some with regard to this point; so confident were they of the superior advantages of subjection to ecclesiastical control, more especially the control of the General Assembly, over any possible advantages of subjection to a board of directors, or trustees; and so persistent were they in asserting this view, that upon reviewing their arguments in the light of to-day, one can scarcely help being reminded of the fable, so dear to children, entitled "The Fox without a Tail." The fox, it will be remembered, was caught in a trap by his tail, and in order to get away was forced to leave it behind. Whereupon he resolved to try to induce his fellows to part with *theirs;* or, as Henry B. Smith expressed it, in his characteristic way, "to attain unto that condition."*

* So at the next assembly of foxes he made a speech on the unprofitableness of tails in general, and the inconvenience of a fox's tail in particular, adding that he had never felt so easy as since he had given up his own. When he sat down, a sly old fellow rose, and waving his long brush with a graceful air, said with a sneer, that if, like the last speaker, he had lost his tail, nothing further would have been needed

I have taken for granted that Dr. Adams' first plan, which gave to the General Assembly a veto in the election of Union directors, was the result of a conference with his friends at Princeton. So too, unquestionably, was his second plan, which conceded to the General Assembly a veto in the election of Union professors. Had either of these modes of solving the question of the theological seminaries occurred to his own mind as the best, he certainly, I repeat, would have brought it before the Joint Committee during the two or more years that Committee was in existence. But I find no evidence that it was even mentioned. Neither the word "veto," nor the thing itself, appears in the report of the Joint Committee made in 1867, nor in that of 1868, nor in the report of the Committee of Conference in 1869. The veto first appears in the plan presented to the board of directors of Union Seminary at the meeting on May 9, 1870. At an adjourned meeting of the same board, held on May 16, it reappeared as a veto in the election of professors. Why this abandonment of the scheme recommended by article ninth of the report of the Joint Committee and by the General Assemblies of 1869? And why the sudden abandonment of the method proposed to the board of directors of Union Seminary on May 9th, and the substitution in its place, on May 16th, of still another method, namely, a veto in the election of professors alone? The whole thing is curious and suggestive in a high degree. Consider that the adjourned meeting of the board occurred on Monday afternoon, May 16th, and that the General Assembly was to meet at Philadelphia on the ensuing Thursday, May 19th. No time, therefore, was to be lost. And no time *was* lost.

to convince him; but till such an accident should happen he should certainly vote in favor of tails.—*Ancient Fables.*

It was too late, however, to give to the public intimations of the plan of May 16th. *The Evangelist*, one of whose editors at that time was a prominent minister of the late Old School, contained a carefully written editorial, outlining the General Assembly's work. In the course of this article is the following significant paragraph:

It is very desirable that the several theological seminaries connected with the Church be brought into the same, or similar, relations to the Assembly. The scheme proposed by the *Princeton Review*, April number, has met with much favor. Let it be understood that the boards of the respective seminaries shall be allowed to fill the vacancies in their own number, as that scheme contemplates; and to appoint the incumbents of the several chairs, subject in each case to the approval of the next General Assembly; and, it is thought, the seminaries of both branches will cheerfully come upon this platform. *Princeton and Union are understood to be prepared for it, and to desire it.*

The article in the *Princeton Review* for April, 1870, was probably written by Dr. Charles Hodge, the founder and then senior editor of the *Review*. The "scheme" referred to was as follows:

Let the Assembly confide the supervision and control of the seminaries now under its control to their respective boards of direction, as now, with simply these alterations: 1. That these boards shall nominate persons to fill their own vacancies *to the Assembly for confirmation.* 2. That they shall arrange the professorships, and appoint the professors, subject to ratification by the Assembly. This would suffice for unification, so far as seminaries heretofore of the Old School branch are concerned.

It seems to us that it cannot be difficult for the seminaries of the other branch to reach substantially the same platform. They, of course, can report annually to the Assemblies [Assem-

bly]. Without knowing all the details of their present charters, we presume there is no insuperable obstacle to their making the simple by-law that all their elections to fill vacancies in the board or boards of oversight and direction, also of professors, shall be submitted to the Assembly for approval before they are finally ratified. If the charters now forbid such an arrangement, doubtless alterations could easily be obtained which would admit of it, or something equivalent. —pp. 311, 312.

At the opening, then, of the first General Assembly of the reunited Church, on May 19, 1870, the case stood thus: Princeton objected to the "recommendation" of the Assemblies of 1869 as unwise and could not follow it without imperilling a portion of her endowments; Union, warned in time, refused to adopt the Princeton "scheme" with regard to directors, but offered to accept it in a greatly modified form with regard to professors; while both had memorialized the General Assembly in favor of the latter arrangement. This posture of things was a logical, not to say necessary, outcome of the whole situation. It followed inevitably that Princeton should look forward with special solicitude to the possible action of the Assembly at Philadelphia, touching theological seminaries. Some of her dearest interests were, as she believed, more or less involved in the issue. It would have been strange, indeed, had she not regarded with a certain misgiving the part which the new copartners might take in shaping that issue. Her temptation was to overestimate the importance of a "uniform system" in dealing with the theological seminaries, and to be too solicitous of having them all even as she herself was. The temptation of Union, on the other hand, was rather to yield too readily to the magnanimous impulses of the hour, and so allow her cooler judgment to be overpowered by the surging tide of reunion enthusiasm.

Pope Innocent XII. wrote to the French prelates, who had procured the famous brief condemning Fenelon: "He erred by loving God too much,"—"*Peccavit excessu amoris divini*";—so one might say of Dr. Adams, that he erred, if at all, in too exclusive devotion to the peace and harmony of the reunited Church; and the same might be said of most of his associates in the directory of Union Seminary. But on one point Union and Princeton were in perfect accord. Both regarded it as exceedingly desirable that theological professors should no longer be elected by the General Assembly; Princeton, primarily, on her own account; Union, on account of Princeton, as also of the other Old School seminaries. It is fair to add that some of the strongest friends of Princeton were, no doubt, influenced by another reason for wishing to be liberated from further subjection to the General Assembly in the election of its professors; namely, distrust of the doctrinal soundness of the late New School Church. Dr. Charles Hodge led a whole company of eminent Old School men, who to the last protested and fought against reunion largely on this ground; they had no sympathy with it. To some of these, especially to Dr. Hodge himself, Dr. Beatty refers in a striking letter printed in *The Evangelist* of August 6, 1891: "Dr. Adams knew what great difficulties and conflicts of mind I had from the fact that my best friends were in opposition to my views; and I made the request of him that after my death he would state these things in some article in *The Evangelist*." Did the simple fact of reunion at once change their honest convictions on this subject? Not at all. And, therefore, the sudden accession of the New School branch to equal power in the General Assembly, bringing their "loose" notions of subscription and all their other objectionable views with them, intensified the desire to take the election of Princeton professors out of that body.

And it is only right to add further, that in voting, as they all did, in favor of remitting the election of professors in the Old School seminaries to their several boards of direction, the commissioners who belonged to the late New School branch were voting to dispossess themselves at once of a power in the control of those seminaries, which reunion had fairly put into their hands. It was the proper thing for them to do; but it was also a handsome thing to do so promptly and so heartily.

On the basis, then, of a common sentiment respecting the election of theological professors both Union and Princeton memorialized the General Assembly; and through their joint influence the plan proposed by Union was unanimously adopted.

And just here let me say that in the negotiations and discussion relating to the theological seminaries from 1866 to 1870, and in most of the pending controversy about the veto power as well, one ever recurring fallacy and misapprehension is perceptible; viz., that all the seminaries stood and stand substantially upon the same ground and should therefore be dealt with in the same way. A "uniform *system*" of ecclesiastical control or supervision, was the thing sought for. It was a thing impossible without uprooting or suppressing original elements of the utmost value in the very being and life of several of the seminaries. How could Union and Princeton, for example, be put upon a footing of "perfect equality," when one of these institutions derived its origin from the action of a company of good men in the cities of New York and Brooklyn, and possessed complete autonomy; while the other was created by the special action of the General Assembly and was subject to its ultimate authority in all things? And the differences between the two institutions are still radical. This point should be kept constantly in mind. It will not do, for example, to

consider the legal relations of Princeton and of Union to the General Assembly, as if these relations were the same. They are almost wholly different. Princeton derives its origin from the General Assembly, which is its patron and the fountain of its powers. The General Assembly had nothing to do with the founding of Union, is not its patron nor the fountain of any of its powers. The proprietorship and control of the General Assembly over Princeton, although modified in one respect in 1870, remain still intact with regard to other points of vital importance. In the election of its directors, as well as of its professors, Princeton is subject to the veto of the General Assembly, and so it is in suspending or removing a professor. The Assembly has no such power in the case of Union. For cause the board of directors of Union can discipline, suspend, or remove a professor; can at its discretion assign him specific duties, and transfer him from one chair to another, or create a new chair and put him into it; and the General Assembly has no voice whatever in the matter.

I have thus stated some of the principal reasons and influences that in 1870 induced Union Seminary to concede to the General Assembly a portion of its autonomy.

(*c*). *Action and purpose of the Board of Directors in making this concession.*

The subject was first brought before the board by Dr. Adams at a meeting held on May 9, 1870. Among the directors present were Edwin F. Hatfield and Jonathan F. Stearns, who with Dr. Adams had been members of the Joint Committee on Reunion; Joseph S. Gallagher, James Patriot Wilson, Charles Butler, Norman White, Fisher Howe, William A. Booth, D. Willis James, and John Crosby Brown. These names speak for themselves and need no glossary. They represent moral strength, sound

judgment, large and varied experience, world-wide influence, intelligent piety, and all the other qualities that go to make up solid weight of character. To most of the directors the plan proposed for their adoption was wholly new. They had never before heard of it. But as coming from Dr. Adams, as offered in the interest of the unity and harmony of the Presbyterian Church, and, also, in response to urgent persuasions from the old and honored seminary at Princeton, it won their consent, if not their entire approval. So far as its weak points were concerned, it took them at a serious disadvantage. They had no time for reflection. And so, while there was considerable discussion, with a single notable exception none opposed the scheme. Several of the professors were present, but they raised no objection. The record would doubtless be different had Henry B. Smith been among them. He was a theologian of extraordinary sagacity, always looking before and after, for he had the instincts of a born statesman. And his devotion to Union Seminary was a ruling passion. The plan of putting the institution under ecclesiastical control never pleased him. He considered the generous and self-governing liberty, which was its birthright, a blessing too great to be parted with at any price. He distrusted also a certain tendency and temper, or, rather, as he viewed it, distemper, which again and again in the last century and in our own had troubled the peace and hampered the free development of American Presbyterianism. In 1837, at the age of twenty-one, he had been a watchful eyewitness of the turbulent scenes at Philadelphia, when the four synods were cut off and the great disruption was inaugurated. From that time he was a keen observer of all that went on in the two branches of the Presbyterian Church; and before coming to New York, thirteen years later, he had formed opinions on the subject which re-

mained essentially unchanged to the day of his death. In a letter to me, dated Amherst, September 17, 1850, he wrote:

> I go to New York in full view of the uncertainties and difficulties of the position. It [the Seminary] stands somewhere between Andover and Princeton, just as New School Presbyterianism stands between Congregationalism and the consistent domineering Presbyterianism, and will be pressed on all sides. Whether it is to be resolved into these two, or to be consolidated on its own ground, is still a problem. I am going to New York to work,—to work, I trust, for my Master.

This "consistent domineering" element, so far as it prevailed in Presbyterianism, whether in the theological or the ecclesiastical sphere, he regarded with strong dislike. Had he been present, therefore, at the meeting of the board on May 9, 1870, I believe he would have stood just where D. Willis James so firmly stood with respect to the plan of conceding to the General Assembly so vital a part of the Seminary's chartered rights and autonomy as the last decisive word in the election of its own professors. And Henry B. Smith was, probably, the only man whose voice at that time on any matter touching the theological seminaries would have been equally potential with that of William Adams. But, unfortunately, early in the previous year, just as reunion was about to triumph, Professor Smith, utterly broken down in the service of Union Seminary and of the Presbyterian Church, had fled for his life beyond the sea, and he was still abroad.

I have intimated that a single director only—D. Willis James—raised his voice against the plan proposed by Dr. Adams. Mr. James is a grandson of Anson G. Phelps, and thus is identified with the history of the Seminary by

his close kinship to three generations of its benefactors, as well as by his own munificent gifts. At the memorable meeting of the board of directors of Union Seminary, held on June 5, 1891, Mr. James made the following highly important statement:

I feel it due to the board of directors to give to them a statement of what occurred at the meeting of the directors held on the 9th of May, 1870, when the matter of the connection of the Seminary with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church was first considered. That meeting, from the circumstances of the case, and all that occurred there at that time, is most clearly and indelibly impressed upon my memory.

Dr. Adams proposed that the Union Theological Seminary should give to the General Assembly a veto power over the appointment of the directors of the Seminary, assigning as the reason, in much detail, that it would be a great aid to the other seminaries of the Church, whose professors were appointed by the action of the General Assembly and not by the board of directors. He also stated that experience had shown that the professors thus appointed by the General Assembly were frequently not such as proved to be the best men for the several positions.

I strenuously objected to giving the veto power in the appointment of the directors to the General Assembly on the ground that it was practically placing the control of the property and all the interests of the Union Theological Seminary in the hands of the General Assembly, and that such action was fraught with great danger.

A general discussion occurred, participated in by most of the directors, and I spoke a second time on the subject, calling attention most earnestly to the great danger, as it seemed to me, of any such action by which the large property of the Seminary, and all its interests, would be practically turned over to the control of the General Assembly.

But when it seemed evident that a vote would be taken and that the resolution would be passed by the board of directors, I arose for the third time, feeling very strongly the importance of the matter under consideration, and said, in substance, that I should request, when the vote was taken, that it should be by ayes and nays, so that my vote could be recorded in the negative, and that I should also request that my most earnest and solemn protest be entered in full in the minutes, to the end that when the disaster came, as it certainly would from this action—perhaps after all those who were taking part in the discussion at that time had passed away—the Seminary could then have the benefit of this protest and whatever legal advantages might come from such protest.

I said that I did not desire to make factious opposition, but that I felt the interests of the Seminary were being jeopardized and that a great injury was being done to its future.

When I sat down Dr. Prentiss rose and said, substantially, that he would surprise the mover of the resolution by the action he was about to take, but that he had become impressed with the fact that it was wise to take further time for consideration, and would move a postponement of the matter for that purpose. This motion led to the postponement of the vote.

Prior to the adjourned meeting of May 16, 1870, I had an interview with Dr. Adams and expressed to him my sincere regret that I had been compelled to differ with him and other members of the board, but he then tendered to me his thanks for my having taken the course I did, and said he felt that it was wiser not to have passed the resolution he first proposed.

He then suggested, in the interest of the other seminaries then controlled by the General Assembly, the motion which was presented and adopted on the 16th of May, 1870, viz. : That the veto power in the appointment of the profes-

sors should be given to the General Assembly, and this solely in the interest of other seminaries which would be benefited by this action of the Union Theological Seminary.

I expressed to him then the view that I held, that even this action, though much better than placing the control of the property in the hands of the General Assembly, was still a very serious mistake, and calculated to produce great and unfortunate mischief.

I said, however, that if he and other directors felt that this was the wisest course, and as they had yielded the matter of the veto power over the appointment of directors, while I would not vote in favor of the resolution, I would not go on record against it; and, as a result, the resolution was passed on the 16th of May, 1870, giving to the General Assembly only a veto over the appointment of professors and nothing more.

(*d*). *Did the Board of Directors of Union Seminary suppose that in their action on May* 16, 1870, *they were offering to enter into a legal compact with the General Assembly?*

1. It has been assumed by many, and strenuously argued by others, that this was their understanding of the matter; at all events, that such was the real quality and effect of their action. And on the ground of its possessing this character, we have been treated to somewhat elaborate definitions and expositions of the nature and binding force of a contract, the extent and limitations of *ultra vires*, and I know not how many other lessons in legal lore. And yet, according to the best of my own recollection, as a member of the board, and of my belief concerning all the other members present, not a single director supposed the board was entering into any such legal compact. Three directors who were present on May 9th, and also on May 16th, had been members of the Joint Committee on Reunion, as I

have said before; one of them, Jonathan F. Stearns, was also a member of the Joint Committee of Conference, which reported the final basis and plan of union to the two Assemblies in 1869. He aided in preparing that important report, voted for it, signed it, and gave it his hearty approval. And it was in this report, made and explained to the Old School Assembly in the Brick Church by Dr. Musgrave, that those emphatic sentences relating to the articles on seminaries, boards, and the like occur: "We will not consent to make these articles a covenant; we won't adopt them as a legal compact binding upon the future." Dr. Stearns was the most trusted counsellor of Henry B. Smith, and not unlike him in sagacity and forethought, as also in devotion to Union Seminary and the Presbyterian Church. To Dr. Stearns more, in my opinion, than to any other man did Union Seminary owe the coming of Henry B. Smith to New York. The New School branch of the Church especially never knew the full extent of her indebtedness to him, for he was as modest as he was wise, fearless, and public-spirited. Is it likely that such a man would have sat quietly and given his vote for a settlement of the question of the theological seminaries in a way, on a principle, and with an understanding contradicting so utterly the report which a few months before he had joined in framing and urging upon the acceptance of the General Assemblies? The thing is inconceivable.

But I have not stated this aspect of the case in its full strength. Dr. Adams himself was a member of the Joint Committee of Conference, and signed the report as its chairman. He also presented the report to the New School Assembly in the Church of the Covenant, as Dr. Musgrave did at the same time to the Old School Assembly in the Brick Church. He explained it in a careful speech, calling attention to the point that the articles of agreement or con-

current declarations were not a compact or contract, but recommendations only as to what might be suitable and expedient. Is it at all probable, is it really conceivable, that such a man as Dr. Adams, only a few months later, would have proposed to the board of directors of Union Seminary a plan touching the whole future of that institution, which involved the very thing so distinctly repudiated by the unanimous vote of the Joint Committee of Conference? and repudiated, too, by both Assemblies?

The plan of 1870 was an expression of Christian confidence and good-will on the part of the directors of Union Seminary. In offering to give up so much of their autonomy as was involved in conceding to the General Assembly a veto in the election of its professors, they were not thinking of a legal compact, whereby the Seminary would gain certain positive advantages in return; they were thinking simply of what seemed to them, on the whole, best fitted to promote the harmony and prosperity of the united Church, and the true interests of all the other theological seminaries. Their offer was in its very essence, as the General Assembly a few days after characterized it, an act of high "generosity," or as Dr. Musgrave expressed it, in 1871, an act of "courtesy." But generosity and courtesy belong to a line of thought and action totally distinct from that of a legal compact with its definite obligations and advantages. Had the discussion in the board of directors of Union Seminary moved along the line of such a compact, nothing is more certain than that the plan of agreement would have failed utterly.

No doubt there is an element of agreement in a legal compact. Every such compact is an agreement; but there are many sorts of agreement which are only differing forms of good understanding, friendly arrangements, acts of generosity or courtesy, which lose their most essential

virtue and all their beauty the moment you invest them with the rigidity and binding force of a legal contract. The discussion on reunion, and especially the speech of Dr. Musgrave before the Old School Assembly—heard, probably, by most of the Union directors—had made the whole Presbyterian Church familiar with this distinction. "We will not consent," said Dr. Musgrave, referring to the recommendations about theological seminaries, boards, etc., "we will not consent to make these articles a covenant. *We won't adopt them as a legal compact, binding upon the future; yet we are acting in good faith and as honorable men, and we say to you that we will not change them at any future time without obviously good and sufficient reasons.*" Exactly so would the directors of Union Seminary have expressed themselves with regard to their generous arrangement with the General Assembly. Such words as "compact," "contract," "covenant," are carefully avoided in the memorial of Union Seminary and in the action of the General Assembly thereupon. "Plan," "rule," "agreement," "method," or the like, are the terms used. It was intended, just as the ninth article in the report of the Joint Committee was intended, "as a measure for the maintenance of confidence and harmony, and not as indicating the best method for all future time" (*Moore's Digest*, p. 384).

All that the article in the *Princeton Review* for April, 1870, written by Dr. Charles Hodge, or with his approval, ventured to suggest to the New School branch was "making the *simple by-law* that all the elections to fill vacancies in the board or boards of oversight and direction, also of professors, shall be submitted to the Assembly for approval before they are finally ratified." Who ever heard of a "simple by-law" that could not be suspended, changed, or repealed by the power that made it? The difference be-

tween the concessions asked, if not claimed, of the New School by the Old School opponents of the first plan of reunion, as reported by the Joint Committee in 1867, and the concessions hoped for just before the meeting of the Assembly of 1870, as stated in the above article of the *Princeton Review*, is very striking. It is the difference between a maximum and a minimum. Perhaps it cannot be better illustrated than by some extracts from a letter of Professor A. A. Hodge, of the Allegheny Seminary, to Dr. Henry B. Smith, written in December, 1867. The italics are his own:

Although I am in every sense unknown to you, my knowledge of and indebtedness to you through your writings, and especially our community of interest in the subject of this letter, emboldens me to intrude it upon you, and to urge your deliberate attention to it.

Undoubtedly one of the chief causes of uneasiness on the part of the Old School, in view of reunion upon the terms proposed by the Joint Committee, is the inequality between the positions of the two parties in respect to seminaries. This is evident from the fact that serious objection is made to the terms proposed in respect to this interest by a far larger number of presbyteries than is necessary to defeat the whole matter. Now, although I write without consultation with or the knowledge of a single person, I feel certain that a compromise to the following effect would be highly gratifying to the great majority of those most nearly interested in seminaries on our side, and further, that if proposed from your side it would be almost certainly accepted by our General Assembly as a condition of union.

Suppose then the matter be adjusted on the following principles:

1. *All* the seminaries of both parties to be, as a *condition* of union, brought in on the same basis, so that there may be perfect equality.

2. That you on your side admit the principle of direct ecclesiastical control, and put your seminaries each under the care of one or more contiguous synods. The synods to elect the boards of directors, the boards of directors to elect the professors. The General Assembly, for the sake of preserving uniformity of doctrine in the Church, to possess the right of peremptory veto in the case of the election of a professor.

3. That we on our side yield the principle of the immediate control of the seminaries by the General Assembly, and put each of our seminaries under one or more synods in the manner specified above.

Such a plan might have some legitimate objections. It would certainly meet with decided opposition from some of the more distant portions of our branch, which would thereby be dispossessed of powers previously enjoyed. It would be *obviously unadvisable for such a proposition to be publicly offered* by any of our professors. Therefore, I shall do no more than make this suggestion to you. If you agree with me as to the plan, and are willing to present it to the representatives of your branch in the Joint Committee, I have much hope that it will prevail.

Professor Smith, regarding the scheme so strongly urged in this interesting letter as wholly impracticable, felt unwilling to recommend it to the New School representatives of the Joint Committee.

(*e*). *Scope and limitations of the veto in the election of its Professors offered to the General Assembly by the Directors of Union Seminary in* 1870.

Passing from the question of the nature of this offer, let us consider its extent and limitations. The language used is very exact and carefully chosen. My impression is, that it differs materially from that used in the plan presented to the board on May 9th. Before the meeting on May 16th

legal counsel had probably been taken. In nearly all, if not in all, the proposals and articles on the subject, prior to the meeting at Philadelphia, positive action by the General Assembly was contemplated as requisite to a complete election; in other words, every election or appointment, in order to be complete, must be directly approved, or else disapproved, by the General Assembly. This would be in accordance with the usual practice in the political sphere. Ordinarily the veto power goes along with the power of approval and confirmation. It is so with the Presidential veto. It is so generally with the veto power of governors and mayors. But it was not so here; and as a consequence, even the General Assembly itself, as we shall see, required twenty years fairly to learn the lesson of the extent of its power in the case. All that the Assembly can rightfully do, under the agreement of 1870, is either to disapprove or to do nothing. This shows how sagaciously the whole matter was finally arranged. The plan bears on its very face marks of the utmost caution and forethought. Had it included the power of approval, as well as of disapproval, every election reported between 1870 and 1891 would then have come before the Assembly for confirmation, and might have led to any amount of more or less excited discussion and conflict of opinion. An approval, if strenuously opposed by only a small minority, would be likely to prejudice even a good appointment; while an approval, carried by a bare majority, could hardly fail to stir up bad feeling among the friends of the candidate, if not in his own breast. Whatever evils are incident to the election of theological teachers by the General Assembly, the plan of 1870 certainly reduces them to a minimum, as compared with a plan which should embrace the power of ratifying, as well as of vetoing, every appointment. It is likely that between May 9th and May 16th Dr. Adams not only took

legal counsel, but that he also sought the counsel of those two wise men and old friends, Dr. Stearns and Dr. Hatfield, with whom for nearly three years he had been in the habit of conferring on this very question of the theological seminaries in the Joint Committee on Reunion, or in the New School branch of it. That the General Assembly, under the rule of 1870, has no power of approval is admitted now on all hands.

But there is another point, concerning which there has been and is still direct conflict of opinion; the point, namely, whether the transfer of a member of the faculty from one chair to another is an election in the same sense as an original appointment, and therefore subject to the Assembly's veto. The General Assembly at Detroit assumed that a transfer does not differ from an original election, and by a large majority voted to disapprove the transfer of Dr. Briggs from the chair of Hebrew and cognate languages to the new chair of Biblical Theology. The position of the board of directors, on the other hand, was and is that the original election of Dr. Briggs, not having been disapproved by the General Assembly, fixed his status, once for all, as a member of the teaching faculty of Union Seminary; and that his transfer to the chair of Biblical Theology could not therefore unsettle, suspend, or in any wise change that status; it was simply an assignment of new and other duties, belonged solely to the jurisdiction of the board, and lay wholly beyond the control or supervision of the General Assembly.

This view is enforced by several considerations: 1. It harmonizes with the exclusion from the plan, adopted by the directors on May 16th, of all direct power of approval. That exclusion indicates plainly the animus and latent, if not the deliberate, purpose of the board. I say "latent, if not deliberate, purpose," because no evidence exists that

in using the terms "election" and "appointment" there was any thought or suspicion in the mind of a single director present that the agreement included also a transfer from one chair to another. Not a word was lisped on this point.* Had it been raised then and there; had Dr. Adams, in explaining his revised plan, said to the board: "I feel bound to tell you frankly that this plan, faithfully carried out, will of necessity render the internal administration and housekeeping of Union Seminary, touching some of its most vital interests, subject to the ultimate control of the General Assembly," Mr. James' protest of May 9th would have been echoed throughout the room. The plan would have withered on the spot. Or, to state the case in another way, had the question been put to Dr. Adams: "Do you mean to include in the terms 'election' and 'appointment' a *transfer* also, such as we often make from one chair to another? In our relations to the General Assembly will the original status of one of our professors be lost by calling him to new duties in the institution, until it has been recovered by subjecting him again to the veto of the General Assembly?" the prompt answer, I am quite sure, would have been: "Most certainly not; that

* Among the members of the faculty present was Dr. Philip Schaff. In a letter to me, Dr. Schaff, referring to Dr. Adams' proposal "as a generous peace-offering on the altar of the reunion of Old and New School," adds:

My impression was that Dr. Adams had previously conferred with Dr. Charles Hodge, who in behalf of Princeton was anxious to get freedom from the control of the Assembly in the appointment of professors. Our loss was Princeton's gain.

The distinction between the appointment of a new professor and the transfer of an old one to a new department was not mentioned, and probably not even thought of, at that time. I myself was transferred three times—to the Hebrew, to the Greek, and to Church History—and nothing was said about a veto.

goes without saying. We are proposing to enter, not into a legal compact, but into a friendly and courteous arrangement by which the General Assembly shall have a voice in respect to the qualifications of every man who is to be a theological teacher in our Seminary. But once admitted, unforbidden, into our faculty, the Assembly will have nothing further to do with him except indirectly, of course, as a Presbyterian minister. We are not trying to drive a bargain, but to do what seems to us a fair and wise, not to say very generous, thing in the interest of the peace and prosperity of the reunited Church."

2. But even assuming, for an instant, that the plan of 1870 was a legal compact, binding as such upon the future, it should yet be interpreted in strictest accordance with its specific design. Whatever power it concedes is a power of trust; and if that power can be rightly delegated at all, which I will not here discuss, it should certainly be delegated in such manner and with such careful limitations as to preclude all suspicion of tampering or dealing lightly with the trust. We may, indeed, distinguish between the trustee and the director, but we must not divide them. The chartered rights and duties of the board cross and run into each other. The office of every director of Union Seminary is a sacred trust; a trust not merely for property, but for something infinitely more precious and enduring —the moral and spiritual treasures of the institution; its grand design as a school of divinity; the good deeds and worth of its excellent founders; the fame of its learned, wise, and godly teachers; the glorious achievements of its alumni in the service of their Master; the memories of its munificent friends and benefactors; in a word, its invaluable history and traditions. Hence every director, before entering upon his duties, is required to take this solemn pledge:

Approving of the plan and constitution of the Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York, and of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Presbyterian form of church government, I do solemnly promise to maintain the same so long as I shall continue to be a member of the board of directors.

3. And then it seems to me a strong incidental confirmation of the view taken by the directors of Union Seminary with regard to the scope of the agreement of 1870, that the official minutes of the board take for granted the correctness of that view. The board has again and again assigned its professors to new duties and to new chairs. Three times it transferred Dr. Schaff from one chair to another. Last winter it created a new chair, and selected Dr. Briggs to fill it, transferring Dr. Brown at the same time to the chair vacated by Dr. Briggs. The record of these and similar changes on the minutes of the board varies in language. The terms "elected," "chosen," "appointed," "transferred," have been used more or less indiscriminately; and that for the simple reason that in the mind of the board there was no thought of any question touching its own proper authority in each case. *Transfer* is evidently the fitting term, expressing both the fact and the power; and this is the word which has of late years been chiefly employed in the minutes of the executive committee and of the board of directors of Union Seminary. If all "appointments" in the literal sense are subject to the veto of the General Assembly, temporary assignments of duty would have to be reported to the Assembly; for nothing is more common than to "appoint" a professor to such special duties.

4. There is still another consideration which sustains the view that a transfer is wholly different from an original election; the fact, namely, that the *strict rules of procedure*

in the original election have not been observed in the case of a mere transfer. The disregard of these rules has in repeated instances been so positive and varied as to invalidate the whole action of the board, if a transfer is the same thing as an original appointment. Alike in the open disregard of some of these rules and in inducting at once into the new or vacant chair without any respect to the General Assembly—as, for example, in the case of Dr. Briggs—we have a clear demonstration that in the view of the board of directors of Union Seminary a transfer has always been regarded as simply an assignment of duties, and subject, therefore, neither to the veto of the General Assembly nor to a strict observance of the usual forms prescribed by law and custom in first calling a man to the service of the Seminary.

In the discussion of the extent of the Assembly's veto power the singular point has been made that we ought to distinguish between the different chairs and the subject-matter taught in them. A Jew, for example—so I have heard it argued by at least two eminent directors in a leading Presbyterian seminary—a Jew might make an excellent professor of Hebrew; but suppose, hiding behind the technicality of a transfer, you should put him into the chair of Systematic Theology, would *that* not be a case for the intervention of the General Assembly's veto power? I reply, No; not if the Assembly had failed to disapprove of his taking the chair of Hebrew. I freely admit that there are devout, God-fearing Jews, abundantly *qualified* to be professors of Hebrew in any theological seminary. Isaac Nordheimer, my own beloved teacher, was such a man; but the best and most learned Jew in the world could not get into the chair of Hebrew in Union Seminary, to say nothing of his transfer to the chair of Systematic Theology, for how could a Jew sincerely adopt the West-

minster Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures? Here is the pledge taken by every professor, whatever may be his chair:

I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and I do now, in the presence of God and the directors of this Seminary, solemnly and sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. I do also, in like manner, approve of the Presbyterian Form of Government; and I do solemnly promise that I will not teach or inculcate anything which shall appear to me to be subversive of said system of doctrines, or of the principles of said Form of Government, so long as I shall continue to be a professor in the Seminary.

(*f*). *Acceptance of the offer of Union Seminary made to the General Assembly in its memorial of* 1870.

Let us now go back to the meeting of the Assembly in Philadelphia. Dr. Adams, as we have seen, was appointed chairman of the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries. He asked, as a personal favor, I repeat, to be excused from serving in that capacity, on the ground that all the seminaries under the care of the Assembly belonged to what had been the Old School branch, but his request was not granted. Before this Committee came the memorial of Union Theological Seminary and also a memorial from Princeton of similar tenor; the difference between them being that Princeton asked what it deemed a great favor to itself, while Union asked what it believed would be a great favor to Princeton and other seminaries. The report of the Committee led to no discussion, met with no opposition, and was unanimously adopted. Here follow some extracts from this report:

That the relations of these several theological seminaries, differing in origin and administration, to the reunited Church should be regarded as a matter of no little delicacy and difficulty, was inevitable. On the one hand it is obvious that a matter so important as the education of its ministry should in some way be under the supervision and control of the Church, so as to secure the entire and cordial confidence of the Church. On the other hand, there is a liberty and flexibility in the matter which must be respected and allowed. If individuals or associations are disposed to found and endow seminaries of their own, there is no power in the Presbyterian Church to forbid it.

As to any project by which the entire control and administration of all our theological seminaries,—for example, as to the election of trustees,—can be transferred to the General Assembly on any principle of complete uniformity, your Committee regard it as wholly impracticable, and the attempt to accomplish it altogether undesirable. To bring it about, should it be undertaken, would require an amount of legislation, in six or seven different States, which would be portentous.

Besides, the intentions and wishes of benevolent men who have founded and endowed some of these seminaries, and aided others on their present footing, should be honorably and zealously protected.

Your Committee, therefore, would recommend no change and no attempt at change in this direction, save such as may safely and wisely be effected under existing charters. For example, the directors of the seminary at Princeton have memorialized this Assembly with the request that the Assembly would so far change its "plan" of control over that institution as to give the board of directors enlarged rights in several specified particulars, subject to the veto of the General Assembly.

Your Committee are unanimously of the opinion that the changes asked for are eminently wise and proper. If it were

within the power of the General Assembly to remit the entire administration of this venerable institution to its board of directors without any of the restrictions they have mentioned as to the supply of their own vacancies, they would cordially recommend it. But inasmuch as the endowments of this Seminary are held on the condition that it should be the property and under the control of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, that trust cannot be vacated nor transferred to any other body. The method desired and proposed by the directors themselves is open to no such objection, and is believed to be quite within the provisions of the law as now defined, being only a convenient and wise mode of executing by the General Assembly itself the trust which it now holds.

A memorial has been presented to this Assembly from the directors of Union Theological Seminary, in New York, bearing upon the point of uniformity as to a certain kind and amount of ecclesiastical supervision.

It had appeared to them—many of them having taken an active part in founding that Seminary thirty-three years ago, in a time, as already noticed, of memorable excitement—that there were great disadvantages and perils in electing professors and teachers by the Assembly itself, without sufficient time or opportunity for acquaintance with the qualifications of men to be appointed to offices of such responsibility.

It is self-evident, as your Committee are agreed, that a body so large as the General Assembly, and composed of men resident, most of them, at so great a distance from the several seminaries, is not so competent to arrange for their interests and usefulness as those having local and personal intimacy with them. Desirous of bringing about as much uniformity as was possible in the relation of the seminaries to the General Assembly of the Church, the directors of Union Seminary have memorialized this Assembly to the effect that the Assembly would commit, so far as practicable, the general administration of all seminaries now under the

control of the Assembly to their several boards of directors; proposing, if this be done, to give to the General Assembly what it does not now possess, the right of veto in the election of professors at Union. In this generous offer, looking solely to the peace and harmony of the Church, the memorialists did not include the same veto in regard to the election of their own directors, inasmuch as these directors hold the property of the Seminary in trust. The trustees of Princeton Seminary, being one of two boards, are a close corporation. The directors of Union Seminary in New York, being but one board, are the trustees.

Leaving all the diversities of method and administration in the several seminaries intact, save in the particulars hereinafter provided for, your Committee are happy to report that there is one mode of unifying all the seminaries of the Presbyterian Church as to ecclesiastical supervision, so far as unification is in any way desirable. It is the mode suggested in the several memorials of the directors of Union and Princeton, and approved, or likely to be approved, from information in our possession, by the directors of Auburn and Lane. This is to give to the General Assembly a *veto* power upon the appointment of professors in all these several institutions. This seems to your Committee to secure all the uniformity, as to the relation of these seminaries to the Church, which can be necessary to ensure general confidence and satisfaction. Less than this might excite jealousy, more than this is cumbersome and undesirable.*

* The full report will be found in Moore's Digest of 1886, pp. 383–386. It is proper to say here, that two statements in the report are somewhat inaccurate; namely, that relating to the ecclesiastical connection in 1836 of the founders of Union Seminary, and that relating to "the design of its founders." Their own language touching this point, as also the facts with regard to their ecclesiastical connection, are given in an earlier part of this paper.

I have said that the report of the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries met with no opposition. The offer of Union Seminary, which was wholly unexpected to the great body of commissioners, whether of the Old or New School, made the happiest impression upon the Assembly and called forth strong words of satisfaction and thankfulness. And yet the Committee appear to have been in some doubt whether all the seminaries, then belonging to the General Assembly, would be willing to pass from under its immediate control; for the report closes with this resolution:

> In case the board of directors of any theological seminary now under the control of the General Assembly should prefer to retain their present relation to this body, the plan of such seminary shall remain unaltered.

Whatever doubt, if any, led to this provision, it was speedily solved in the acceptance of the Princeton plan by all the other seminaries hitherto belonging to the Old School; while Lane, that, like Union, was independent of ecclesiastical control, and Auburn, which was under the watch and care of four adjacent synods, fell in also with the new arrangement by conceding to the General Assembly a veto over the election of their professors. I do not find that, at the time, these changes involved any public discussion, or even attracted public notice. Such was the confiding and hopeful temper of the reunited Church, that they seem to have followed the action at Philadelphia almost as a matter of course.

And yet it would be untrue to say that the new order of things at once allayed all the "apprehensions" and "jealousy," referred to in the report of the Standing Committee on theological seminaries at Philadelphia. "Apprehensions," if not "jealousy," did continue to exist, especially at

Princeton; otherwise it would be scarcely possible to explain some facts in the case, notorious at the time. To show that I do not speak at random, I will give an item sent by me to *The Evangelist* shortly after the Assembly of 1870 had adjourned. It was as follows:

A STRANGE EXCEPTION.

In appointing directors of its theological seminaries, as also trustees and members of its various boards, the General Assembly seems to have been actuated by an admirable spirit of wisdom, fairness, and liberality. In this spirit it actually removed six of its own trustees, all of them gentlemen of the highest character, in order to give due representation to the late New School side. The same excellent spirit was shown in choosing ten new directors for the seminary of the Northwest. But there is one marked exception, which, we frankly confess, has struck us, as we know it has struck others, with a good deal of surprise. We refer to the new directors of Princeton Seminary. They are as follows:

Directors of Princeton Seminary.—Ministers: William D. Snodgrass, D.D., Joseph McElroy, D.D., G. W. Musgrave, D.D., Robert Hammill, D.D., Joseph T. Smith, D.D., Robert Davidson, D.D., Gardiner Spring, D.D. Elders: Robert Carter, John K. Finley, George Sharswood, LL.D., Thomas C. M. Paton, to fill the place of Moses Allen.

In *The Evangelist* of the following week appeared a careful editorial, entitled "Princeton Theological Seminary," and I give herewith extracts from this article, underscoring some passages, in order that they may the more easily be compared with the official reports of the Joint Committee and of the action of the General Assemblies, cited in earlier parts of this paper:

A paragraph in our last paper referred to the reappointment of the former directors of this Seminary, all of whom belonged to the former Old School branch of the Church, as

an apparent exception to the rule of the late General Assembly to unite representatives of both branches in all its appointments. We are happy to be informed that the impression of inequality conveyed by our statement is not warranted by the facts, and that so far from being an exception to the rule of courtesy and fairness observed by the Assembly, this reappointment of the former directors of Princeton was only another instance of the same generous spirit. The Joint Committee on Reunion unanimously recognized it as fair and proper that while the New School seminaries were, and *after the union must continue to be*, under the *exclusive* control of New School men, by whom they had been founded and endowed, the Old School seminaries should, *in like manner*, be under the direction of Old School men. The Committee therefore proposed, as one of the *terms of reunion*, that any of these seminaries *might withdraw* from the control of the *united* Assembly. This, however, could not be done in the case of the Old School seminaries, as all their endowments were held on the condition of their being under the General Assembly. It was therefore next proposed that the boards of directors should be authorized to elect professors, and to fill their own vacancies, subject to the veto of the General Assembly. Thus no man could be either a professor or director who has not the confidence of the body representing the whole Church. *This plan was adopted by a unanimous vote of the Assembly.* It must be noted, however, that this rule, so far as *directors* are concerned, applies only to "the seminaries now under the control of the General Assembly." The choice of directors under the former New School seminaries is not subject to such veto. It seemed then only courteous and fair that if the boards of directors on the one side *must of necessity remain unchanged*, those on the other side should occupy a *similar* position, and hence that the gentlemen whose terms of service at Princeton had just expired, should be re-elected. This was only carrying out the same spirit of candor which has marked all the Assembly's proceedings.

This article, whether written by the Old School editor of *The Evangelist* or by some one else, was so hopelessly confused that I despaired of trying to correct its errors. Almost every statement about the action of the Joint Committee on Reunion or that of the Assembly is inaccurate; while its statements about the former New School seminaries are directly contrary to the facts in the case. Union Seminary, *even before the close of* 1869, had elected two ministers of what, a few weeks earlier, were Old School churches, namely, Dr. John Hall and Dr. James O. Murray, to fill two clerical vacancies in its board of directors; and in 1870 it filled three more vacancies by the election of three prominent laymen of the late Old School. It was not until 1873 that Princeton elected a director who had belonged to the New School. One of its last directors of distinctively New School antecedents was chosen, I believe, in 1882, viz., the Rev. Robert Russell Booth, D.D., of New York, who is still a member of the Princeton board. Of course, as the years pass away, all special thought of these obsolete ecclesiastical names is passing away with them. It is only fair to add that in no instance, so far as I am aware, have former New School men, elected to such boards of former Old School institutions, dishonored the confidence reposed in them. There may have been such cases; if so, I never heard of them.

III.

SKETCH OF THE OPERATION AND EFFECTS OF THE ASSEMBLY'S VETO POWER IN THE ELECTION OF THEOLOGICAL PROFESSORS FROM 1870 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

I have thus endeavored to trace from stage to stage the course of discussion and of action with regard to theological seminaries in the Joint Committee on Reunion, in the Old

and New School General Assemblies, in the board of directors of Union Seminary, and lastly in the first Assembly of the reunited Church. It has been my aim to give as far as possible all the main facts, omitting nothing essential to a right understanding of the case. At the beginning of the investigation my mind was very much in the dark respecting a number of important points, but after patient research and inquiry, now and then not a little to my own surprise, the needed light appeared. I will now proceed to a sketch of the practical working and effects of the Assembly's veto power from 1870 to the present time.

(*a*). *Early and frequent misapprehension of the extent of this power on the part of the General Assembly.*

The facts bearing on this point are equally curious and instructive. They are curious as an illustration of the tendency in all popular bodies—a tendency partly innate, and in part the effect of ignorance, prejudice, or passion—to stretch their prerogative in the exercise of power. The facts are instructive as illustrating the old maxim that "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance," and also the painful truth that even a court of Jesus Christ is not exempt from the infirmities of human nature. Good men when, armed with authority, they meet together for the performance of important duties and the promotion of sacred objects, mean, of course, to do the thing that is right, and, especially, to keep the whole law under which they act; but how strangely they often err, on the right hand and on the left!

Nothing would seem to be plainer than the power of disapproval as conceded to the General Assembly in 1870, and yet upon the very first opportunity to exercise this power, at Chicago in 1871, the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries recommended the "approval" of certain elections reported to the Assembly; and had it not

been for the presence of Henry B. Smith as commissioner from the Presbytery of New York, the recommendation would no doubt have been unanimously adopted. The "official journal" of the Assembly contains the following record:

UNION SEMINARY.

Prof. Henry B. Smith, D.D., LL.D., of Union Theological Seminary, New York City, moved an amendment to the report of the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries thus:

Resolved, That the clauses of the report of the committee be modified or stricken out which express in the name of the Assembly "approval" of the elections of directors or professors in the seminaries that have adopted the plan suggested by Union Seminary, and ratified by the Assembly in 1870 [see minutes, pp. 64, 65, 148]; since according to said plan such elections are complete unless "vetoed" by the Assembly to which they are reported.

Dr. Musgrave hoped this amendment would be sustained. Union Seminary has courteously, and as he thought wisely, conceded this measure of control over it by the General Assembly, and it was only fair and honorable to accept this amendment. It was so ordered.

One would have supposed that this formal interpretation of the extent of its veto power contained in the resolution offered by Prof. Smith, and seconded by Dr. Musgrave as "only fair and honorable," by a unanimous vote of the Assembly itself, would have settled the question for all time. It did no such thing. Only two years later at Baltimore the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries repeated the error of 1871, and was sustained in doing so by the unanimous vote of the General Assembly.* Nor

* The committee would recommend that the Assembly

was that the last of this remarkable misapprehension. Since 1870 about sixty elections, appointments, and transfers have been reported to the General Assembly. Of these some twenty have been "recognized," "approved," or their "confirmation" voted by the General Assembly; in other words, in a third of the cases reported, the General Assembly did what it had, confessedly, no legal power to do.* These figures will be found nearly, if not altogether, accurate, and they show how easily the most intelligent and conscientious ecclesiastical bodies are led to exercise power that does not belong to them. The chronic misapprehension of which I am speaking cropped out at almost every turn in the newspaper discussions of the veto power, before and after the meeting of the last Assembly, and also at Detroit itself.

(*b*). *Quiescence of the Assembly's veto power from* 1870 *to* 1891.

For twenty years the veto power, conceded to the General Assembly in 1870 by Union Seminary, remained quiescent. During all this period it was never used. While many appointments were "confirmed," or "approved"—illegally, to be sure—*not one was vetoed;* a striking proof,

approve the election of the Rev. Philip Schaff, D.D., to the Brown professorship of Hebrew, and of the Rev. George L. Prentiss, D.D., to the Skinner and McAlphin professorship of Pastoral Theology, Church Polity, and Missionary [Mission] Work. [See minutes of 1873, page 580.]

* Except in the case of Auburn Seminary. On entering into connection with the General Assembly this Seminary, in 1873, as I shall show later, had adopted a by-law by which the appointments of its professors were "primarily made conditional upon the *approval* of the General Assembly." Why this vital change in the agreement of 1870 was made

certainly, of the brotherly harmony and good-will that prevailed in the reunited Church, as also of the wise prudence of our theological seminaries in the choice of their teachers. It seemed, indeed, as if the fears of Henry B. Smith, D. Willis James, and others, who regarded the agreement of 1870 with so much misgiving, were shown by the test of experience to have been groundless. The veto power, however, was not wholly forgotten. In the case of Rev. R. W. Patterson, D.D., in 1873, and perhaps in a few other instances, a professor-elect and his friends were reminded, in a somewhat menacing way, that such a power, though dormant, was still in existence, and might of a sudden wake up.*

(*c*). *Sudden use of the veto power in* 1891.

Wherever real power exists, it is sure to make itself felt. Its turn always comes, sooner or later; nor is the opportunity apt to be neglected, when a much-desired object, whether good or bad, can be secured by its exercise. What is called the *spoils system*, for example—a system which has done so much to poison and vulgarize our political life—is

by the board of commissioners of Auburn Seminary, I do not know. But, of course, that Seminary alone was bound by it.

* In 1873 my appointment to a professorship in the then Northwestern Theological Seminary was threatened with veto on the ground that I had lately in the Swing trial expressed the wish that the Confession of Faith might soon be revised. How would that sound now? But my orthodox opponents were quieted, as I was afterward informed, by the statement of the Committee on Seminaries, that in not vetoing the Assembly *would not necessarily approve*. Time changes both sentiment and logic. [Letter of Rev. Dr. Patterson, dated Evanston, Ill., Aug. 14, 1891.]

largely the outgrowth of that simple power of removal, which the Congress of 1789 decided to belong exclusively to the President. At the time nobody seems to have dreamed that any special harm would come through an abuse of the power. Mr. Madison, whose influence was most potent in this decision of the first Congress, declared that if a President should exercise his power of removal from mere personal motives, or except in extreme cases, he would deserve to be impeached. And for more than a third of a century Executive patronage was used solely as a public trust by Washington and the other great patriots who then ruled the country. Even after 1820, when the mischievous Four Years' law was passed, during the second term of Monroe and the whole term of John Quincy Adams, very few removals were made, and those in every case for cause. Only here and there a far-seeing statesman surmised what, during the next third of a century, lay wrapped up in the unlimited power of removal, when, instead of being used as a public trust, it was going to be so largely prostituted to vulgar greed and the ruthless animosities of selfish partisanship. How different it is now! The spoils system has come to be regarded, not merely by a few far-seeing statesmen, but by tens of thousands of our most thoughtful and patriotic citizens, of both parties, as, on the whole, the greatest evil that, since the overthrow of slavery, besets the moral life of the country. While I am writing this paper in a lovely mountain valley of Vermont, one of the most distinguished of her sons is depicting her heroic services in the Revolutionary war and the civic virtues which rendered her so meet, in advance of all others, to join the Old Thirteen by admission to the Union. It is a romantic and inspiring story, told with an eloquence not unworthy of Daniel Webster or of Edward Everett. And I find in it this

golden passage: "We have lived to see the prohibition of slavery in the earliest constitution of Vermont, become a part of the fundamental law of this nation. May the time be not far off when its declaration against that other and more widespread curse which corrupts and degrades free government, shall be likewise put in force by the body of the American people." *

I have given an illustration from our political history of the way in which power long quiescent may of a sudden, when the fitting opportunity occurs, spring into vigorous and baleful action. Illustrations still more impressive might be drawn from the history of the Christian Church.

Months before the Assembly met at Detroit it became apparent to observing eyes that the transfer of the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., to the new chair of Biblical Theology in Union Seminary was to be sharply contested, and, if possible, vetoed. The contest, of course, would rest upon the ground that a transfer is equivalent to an original election, and subject, therefore, to the disapproval of the General Assembly. There had long existed throughout the Presbyterian Church great dissatisfaction with some of Dr. Briggs' views as expressed in his writings; and had opportunity occurred sooner, it would doubtless have been seized to attempt his removal, by act of the General Assembly, from the Faculty of Union Seminary.

The feeling against Dr. Briggs, already existing and widespread, was very much intensified by the address which he delivered on being inducted into his new chair, January 20, 1891. In response to this address a large number of Presbyteries overtured the General Assembly on the subject. The address also led to the initiation of a judicial

* Oration at the dedication of the Bennington Battle Monument, etc., etc., by E. J. Phelps.

process in the Presbytery of New York. When the General Assembly met on the 21st of May, the excitement about Dr. Briggs and his case had reached a very high pitch. The press, both religious and secular, discussed the matter with extraordinary interest. There had been nothing like it since the reunion; nothing, in truth, like or equal to it since the tempestuous days of 1837–38, when both the ecclesiastical and theological storm-centre swept down with such fury on the old City of Brotherly Love. And the key to the whole situation was the veto power. Had it been admitted on all hands that a transfer differs essentially from an original election, and is not subject to the Assembly's disapproval, there still might have been a Dr. Briggs case, but it would not have been the case that in May last drew the attention of the whole country to Detroit.

(*d*). *The General Assembly at Detroit, and how to judge its course.*

Although my impression of the action of the General Assembly at Detroit in the case of Dr. Briggs is anything but favorable, my impression of the Assembly itself is favorable, on the whole, in a high degree. Judging from all I have read and what I have heard from the lips of those who were present as lookers-on, it seems to me to have been a superior body of Christian men. They came from far and near, from city and country, from the Atlantic and the Pacific shores, and from the most distant parts of heathendom. They differed immensely in age, in training, in experience, in temperament, in social habits and tastes, in their way of looking at things, in the types of piety and religious thought which they represented; but they were very much alike in their love to Jesus Christ, in their faith in His blessed gospel, in their reverence for the Holy Scriptures, in their God-fearing patriotism and

philanthropy. Eye-witnesses told me that they never saw a body of good men who appeared more sincerely desirous to do right, and to do it in a Christian spirit. I was especially touched by what I heard about Judge Breckinridge, for it recalled pleasant boyish impressions of his distinguished and excellent father. He belonged to a historic family, and his own character added honor to the name. Only the evening before his sudden death he expressed to a friend of mine his keen anxiety respecting the case of Dr. Briggs, and his deep sense of responsibility in the vote he was about to give. His last words attest how sincerely he spoke.

It is quite possible to respect and even admire a man's character, and to take for granted the purity of his motives, without always approving his conduct or assenting to his logic. And what is thus true with regard to individuals may be no less true with regard to a body of men, to a party, to a community, and to a whole people. Were it not so, history, instead of being one of the most interesting and instructive of studies, would be repulsive and demoralizing beyond expression. It will ever redound to the honor of the American people that when the stress and agony of their struggle for national life and freedom was once passed, the whirlwind of embittered passions it had aroused began to subside, just as the waves of an angry sea dashing upon a rock-bound coast die away after the storm is over. And these passions have been subsiding ever since. The magnanimous and patriotic sentiments of mutual confidence, love, patience, and brotherhood, which are the crowning glory of our Christian civilization, have been more and more taking their place, and will continue to do so, let us hope, until the billows of sectional strife shall have

——quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

Or, to take an illustration from our Presbyterian annals, was not the reunion of the severed branches of the Church in 1869 a genuine triumph of similar sentiments? We retained, whoever cared to do so, our old differences of opinion respecting the causes and merits, or demerits, of the Exscinding Acts, the Disruption of 1838, and the thirty years of alienation between Old School and New School; but for all that, led, no doubt, by a Divine hand, we came together again in the spirit of mutual trust and love, forgiving and forgetting, in order that we might the more effectually do the good works foreordained for us as a Church to walk in. And yet, even to this day, how far are we from thinking alike about the events of 1837–38, or about the wisdom of the men who taught and led the contending schools! But it now costs us probably no great effort to admit that they, at all events, were good men, fearing God, and honestly meaning, as well as trying, to keep His commandments.

For myself, I remember well the day when to my youthful fancy Albert Barnes was the very embodiment of pious good sense, meek wisdom, and uprightness, as well as freedom, of mind in the interpretation of Holy Scripture; while Robert J. Breckinridge appeared to me as a pugnacious theological "fire-eater," a domineering ecclesiastic, and a persecutor of the saints. My impression of Albert Barnes was only confirmed when, years later, I learned to love and revere him as a personal friend. But time and memorable hours, a third of a century ago, of most interesting talk with him, in the company of Henry B. Smith, Roswell D. Hitchcock and other congenial spirits, quite revolutionized my impression of Robert J. Breckinridge; and while not much changing my opinion of certain features of his course in 1837–38, his relentless hostility to reunion, or his way of doing things, I have ever since had

no trouble whatever in thinking of him as a devoted servant of the Lord, as an able theologian, an humble Christian, a great-hearted patriot, and a brave, even if a somewhat rugged, type of old Kentucky manhood.

While, then, I feel bound to criticise the Assembly's action in the case of Dr. Briggs as unfair, wrong, and unwise in the extreme, let no one suppose me to be imputing bad motives either to the Assembly or to the men who, as I think, misled it. If any of them or their advisers were actuated by such motives, that is not my business; let them answer for it to their own consciences and to God. But I go further than this. So far from imputing unworthy motives to most of the commissioners to the Assembly at Detroit, I can readily believe that they were actuated by the best of motives. By their votes, in disapproval of Dr. Briggs' transfer to the chair of Biblical Theology, they meant to express no personal hostility to him, but a hostility to what they had read or been assured, a hundred times over, and what they honestly supposed, were his opinions and teaching respecting the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures. And had I been a member of the Assembly, viewed the subject as they did, and deemed it right to vote at all, my vote would have gone with theirs. From the bottom of my heart I sympathize with all pious and tender feelings toward the Bible, with jealousy of any rival to its authority, with pain and grief at seeing it assailed from without or lightly esteemed in the house of its friends, and with awe of the divine majesty and glory of its truths. Perhaps more or less of ignorance and prejudice may be mixed up with these sentiments. Be it so; but how much of prejudice and ignorance is apt to be mixed up with everybody's best sentiments! If I must choose between ignorant and prejudiced but sincere love to the Word of God on the one hand, and on the other a rationalistic, fault-

finding temper of mind toward it, I infinitely prefer the former. The Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, is the sure foundation and the germinant principle of American piety. It was so in the beginning of our religious life as a people; it has been so ever since; and unless we prove recreant to our great trust, it will be so in all the years to come. So far as criticism of the Bible, whether literary or theological, aims or tends to subvert this foundation and put something else in place of this principle, I, for one, am opposed to it utterly. And were it not my belief that Dr. Briggs could and would say Amen to this sentiment, I should be equally opposed to him also. Biblical criticism, whether of the higher or lower sort, as I have said elsewhere, is very far from being an exact science, and it mars its own best work just in the degree that it puts on the airs of an exact science, and shouts before it is out of the woods. That has been the bane of rationalism, and if co-existing with it, is none the less a bane of the most orthodox Christian scholarship. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." This senseful proverb applies not to persons alone. It applies also to every kind of knowledge relating to moral and religious truth, more especially to every branch of knowledge that deals with Holy Scripture. Scholarship may be never so able and learned, yet if it be puffed up with self-conceit, if not animated by the spirit of humility and reverence, it is certain to go astray. "Let no man," to use the words of Lord Bacon, "upon a weak conceit of sobriety or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain that a man can search too far or be too well studied in the book of God's Word or in the book of God's works, divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavor an endless progress and proficience in both; only let men beware that they apply both to charity and not to swelling; to use, and not to ostentation."

(*e*). *The Case against Dr. Briggs as argued by John J. McCook.*

Of course the case against Dr. Briggs was set before the commissioners in a variety of ways, as well before they left home as upon their reaching the Assembly. Probably its most plausible presentation upon their arrival at Detroit, was in a lawyer's brief prepared by John J. McCook, a well-known member of the New York Bar.* This brief, bristling with points, and fortified by an array of legal authority, was well fitted *prima facie* to impress the ordinary lay or even clerical mind. I opened my own copy, not without some misgiving, lest the ground against vetoing Dr. Briggs, which had seemed to me so firm, should slip from under my feet. Let me add in passing, that had the friends of Union Seminary been as wise and zealous in their generation as their friends, the enemies of Dr. Briggs, the result at Detroit might have been quite different.

It is noteworthy that a lawyer's brief, prepared with such care, and so confident in its tone, should betray an utter misapprehension of one of the most obvious and vital features of the veto power, as conceded by Union Seminary to the General Assembly. It is solely, as the General Assembly itself decided in 1871, the power of *dis*approval; and yet this brief, again and again, assumes that it was no less the power of approval. Here are instances: "Thus, all appointments of professors are, and the safety of the Church

* One Hundred and Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Detroit, May, 1891. Memorandum of facts and the law controlling the relations of Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, by John J. McCook, Commissioner from the Presbytery of New York.

demands that they always should be, made by the directors conditionally, first upon the *approval* of the General Assembly" (p. 18).

Again, "Point VIII. The only question before this Assembly is the exercise of the power granted to it by Union Seminary under the contract, namely: to *approve* or disapprove the appointment by transfer of Dr. Briggs to the new chair of Biblical Theology" (p. 31).

Mr. McCook opens his brief with a narration of the material facts bearing upon the case. He then makes his "Point I," namely: That the memorial of the directors of Union Seminary in 1870, and the action of the General Assembly thereupon, constituted "a contract upon valid considerations." I have already touched upon the question of contract and pass it here. The first valid consideration was "The benefit to the Union Seminary in securing the influence and name of the General Assembly to REASSURE *pupils and benefactors as to its orthodoxy.*" Imagine the looks of wondering incredulity with which William Adams, Henry B. Smith, Thomas H. Skinner, Roswell D. Hitchcock, Edwin F. Hatfield, and Jonathan F. Stearns—not to mention others—would have listened to this assertion! I am sure they never heard a lisp of it, either before or after 1870. And although for nearly forty years connected with Union Seminary either as director or professor, I read it for the first time in this brief. The statement implies that both pupils and benefactors, being in serious doubt respecting the orthodoxy of the institution, found relief in the agreement of 1870. What pupils? what benefactors? and where is the evidence that the Seminary entered into the "contract" of 1870 in order to reassure its pupils and benefactors as to its own orthodoxy? The whole statement is not only utterly without foundation, but it involves a very gross and offensive imputation upon the

General Assembly, upon Union Seminary, and upon all the parties concerned.

No principle laid down in the Basis of reunion in 1869 was more emphatically asserted than that of the perfect *equality* of both branches, Old School and New, in the matter of their orthodoxy. The whole movement hinged upon the distinct recognition of this principle. Had Dr. Musgrave, Dr. Beatty, and the other Old School leaders intimated that Union Seminary was not as sound in the faith as Princeton, and needed the influence of the General Assembly to "*re*assure pupils and benefactors as to its orthodoxy," that of itself would have broken up the negotiations for union.

The second "good and valuable consideration," received by the Union Seminary under this "contract," was "a large increase of its students, drawn from all parts of the reunited Church." This statement also I believe to be entirely without foundation. Reunion, according to the best of my knowledge and belief, brought very few students to Union Seminary; while it undoubtedly tended, in several ways, to draw them elsewhere. It wrought a great change, for example, in the feeling of New School men toward Old School seminaries, as well as toward the Old School Church; and thus led more or less of those studying for the ministry to enter these seminaries, who would never have thought of doing so before 1870.

The following table, kindly furnished me by the Rev. Charles R. Gillett, librarian of Union Seminary, shows at a glance the number of students for twenty years before and twenty years since 1870, and will enable the reader to judge for himself as to the probable influence of the General Assembly upon the increase of its students by "reassuring pupils and benefactors of the orthodoxy" of the institution. This increase, it will be seen, has been from the

first somewhat irregular. Special causes have from time to time depleted the Seminary. The war for the Union had this effect in a marked degree. In the four years 1861–5 not a few Union students, or young men, who were intending to enter Union Seminary, were at the front, fighting the battles of their country. Then again special causes have occasionally increased the number of students; as, for example, the expectation that the World's Fair would be held in New York. I repeat my own opinion, that the endorsement of its orthodoxy by the General Assembly, during all these twenty years, has never added a dozen names to the roll of students in Union Seminary.

STUDENTS IN UNION SEMINARY, BY YEARS AND CLASSES. UNDERGRADUATES ONLY.

YEAR.	SENIORS.	MIDDLERS.	JUNIORS.	TOTALS.
1890–91.....	43	60	49	152
1889–90.....	43	49	66	158
1888–89.....	36	47	44	127
1887–88.....	35	39	51	125
1886–87.....	53	41	36	130
1885–86.....	37	49	33	119
1884–85.....	39	37	55	131
1883–84.....	33	37	41	111
1882–83.....	39	35	42	116
1881–82... ...	37	40	43	120
1880–81... ...	36	44	40	120
1879–80.....	38	42	50	130
1878–79.....	43	37	39	119
1877–78.....	45	50	47	142
1876–77.....	48	44	47	139
1875–76.....	36	49	51	136
1874–75.....	43	33	40	116
1873–74.....	37	40	34	111
1872–73.	42	42	36	120
1871–72.....	36	40	38	114
Averages.	39.95	42.75	44.10	126.8

YEAR.	SENIORS.	MIDDLERS.	JUNIORS.	TOTALS.
1870–71.....	37	36	37	110
1869–70.....	39	37	37	113
1868–69.....	43	44	40	127
1867–68.....	44	42	47	133
1866–67.....	26	51	31	108
1865–66.....	35	38	50	123
1864–65.....	23	39	38	100
1863–64.....	26	27	32	85
1862–63.....	28	30	28	86
1861–62.....	38	32	39	109
1860–61.....	37	56	40	133
1859–60.....	33	49	59	141
1858–59.....	38	39	43	120
1857–58.....	25	40	43	108
1856–57..	23	33	46	102
1855–56.....	19	31	40	90
1854–55.....	26	32	38	96
1853–54.....	27	31	40	98
1852–53.....	22	24	34	80
1851–52.....	23	21	30	74
Averages.	30.6	36.6	39.6	106.8

YEAR.	SENIORS.	MIDDLERS.	JUNIORS.	TOTALS.
1850–51.....	20	28	25	73
1849–50.....	31	20	41	92
1848–49.....	27	32	32	91
1847–48.....	30	37	36	103
1846–47.....	40	32	43	115
1845–46.....	25	45	30	100
1844–45.....	29	30	46	105
1843–44.....	22	40	31	93
1842–43.....	25	29	44	98
1841–42.....	32	31	39	102
1840–41.....	23	43	33	99
1839–40.....	24	41	55	120
1838–39.....	28	26	32	86
Averages.	27.4	33.4	37.4	98.2

The third "good and valuable consideration" received by Union Seminary under this contract, according to Mr. McCook, consists in the financial aid granted each year to the students from the Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church. How so? The students of Union Seminary had received financial aid every year from the New School Committee of Education. After 1870 they received similar aid from the Board of Education of the reunited Church. Where is the difference? Is a dollar coming by way of Philadelphia a better dollar than used to come from the treasury of the New School Committee of Education right here in New York? Is there more silver or more gold in it? is it stamped with a stronger assurance of orthodoxy?

The fourth and last "good and valuable consideration," binding Union Seminary fast to its contract, consists in "large additions to its endowments and funds such as those received from James Brown, Esq., Gov. Morgan, and others which have been asked for and received since 1870 upon the guaranty of its orthodoxy through its relation to the General Assembly under this contract and the provisions of its Constitution."

I observe in passing that the "Constitution," containing these important provisions, is here referred to with great respect and printed with a big C; while on page 2 it is twice printed with a little c and is spoken of as "the constitution *so-called*." And on page 13 the little c comes back again four times over. In replying to Mr. Henry Day's question, "What authority had the board of 1870 to bind the board of 1891, and take from them their corporate and *constitutional* powers?" Mr. McCook's brief goes on to say: "Such language might be proper if the Constitution of the United States were in question, but to speak of the *corporation's constitution* as conferring con-

stitutional powers is plainly misleading." Why should the constitution of Union Seminary, which its founders intended as the enduring basis and organic law of its existence —full of perennial life, growth, and blessing—be called, slightingly, "the *corporation's* constitution"?

But to return to the fourth "good and valuable consideration," namely, "large additions to its endowments and funds, such as those received from James Brown, Esq., Gov. Morgan, and others upon the guaranty of its orthodoxy." Of course, I do not pretend to say that none of the benefactors of the Seminary were more or less influenced by their confidenee in the orthodoxy of the institution, as guaranteed by its relations to the General Assembly. I do not know. Men are usually led by a variety of motives to give away their money, especially when they do it on a large scale. Of one of the benefactors named, Gov. Morgan, I feel entitled to speak with some confidence. Nearly forty years ago I preached a sermon to my people on the position, character, and claims of Union Theological Seminary, urging its immediate endowment. The sermon made no allusion to the General Assembly, or to what Mr. McCook seems to understand by Presbyterian orthodoxy; but it did set forth what I held, and still hold, to be the chief purpose and function of a great metropolitan institution of Christian theology and learning, like Union Seminary. Thirty years later Gov. Morgan was kind enough to write to me respecting my sermon: "There is not an expression in it which I do not approve. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for presenting this vastly important subject in its true light." Here follow a few passages from the sermon which met his approval:

The character of Union Seminary is eminently catholic in the true sense of the word; it is at once liberal and conservative. There is nothing that I am aware of in its history,

nothing in its associations, nothing in its general policy, nothing in its temper, which should make this institution cleave inordinately to the past or to the future; which should render it unstable in the ways of old truth, or unwilling to greet new truth with a friendly welcome; nothing which commits it to any party or prevents its cordial relations with all parties that love the Gospel and Christian union. It stands in special connection with our own branch of the great Presbyterian family; but it numbers on its board of directors, and among its warmest friends, influential members of the other branch; while it seeks its professors and attracts its students as readily from the old Puritan body of New England, as if its predilections were all Congregational. If you will have an institution occupying as catholic a ground as the distracted state of the Church in our day seems to permit, I do not know how you can well come nearer to such a plan than have the founders of Union Seminary. Its main advantages are as accessible and useful to a Baptist, a Methodist, an Episcopalian, or a Congregationalist, as to a Presbyterian; and students of all these and of other denominations have availed themselves of them. Let it be understood that in what I have said, or may say, I cast no reflection upon any other seminary. All honor to Princeton, and Lane, and Auburn, and Andover, and Bangor, and New Haven, and others of whatever name, that are doing the Master's work!

As the seat, too, of a liberal and profound theological culture New York ought to stand foremost in the land. She ought for her own sake. There is perhaps no other power, after the Word preached, which would do more to preserve her Christian influence, wealth, and enterprise from falling a prey to the show, self-aggrandizement, and other vices incident to the predominance of a commercial spirit. She ought for the sake of our country and the world. Let a wise, tolerant, Christian theology flourish here, and it would diffuse a beneficent radiance over the land, and even among

pagan nations. The position, then, of the Union Seminary is unsurpassed both for the training of ministers and for the cultivation of sacred learning. For this reason its founders planted it in the city of New York.

I have the clearest conviction that the Union Seminary is capable of doing a great work for Christ and the Church. It has already done much. Not a few of the most useful ministers in the land, not a few of our best missionaries to the heathen, are among its alumni. Already, too, has it made invaluable contributions to the higher theological literature of the age. But I trust it has still a nobler career in the future. I look forward to the time when young men of piety and generous endowments shall flock to it in thousands from all quarters of the Republic ; from California and Oregon, and from the islands of the sea, even ; when its library shall be the resort of Christian scholars from neighboring towns and cities ; when its professorships shall be multiplied so as to embrace one for each great branch of sacred lore ; when it shall be the pride and glory of our churches and its treasury be continually enriched by the princely donations of the living and the dying ; when, in a word, it shall be such a nursery of men of God and such a citadel of holy faith as the voice of Providence commands us to build up in this emporium of the New World.

Gov. Morgan's letter to me closed thus:

I have always thought, and I still think, that New Yorkers, of all others, ought to do something for a good institution, like Union Seminary, *in their own city* and not send all their money to Princeton. I am convinced now more than ever that my judgment in this respect has not been at fault.

In his letter to Dr. Adams offering to establish a fund of one hundred thousand dollars for the erection of a new library building and for the improvement, increase, and support of the library, Gov. Morgan begins by saying: "I

desire to show my appreciation of the usefulness of the Union Theological Seminary, and to *aid in the great work it is now doing for the country.*" No mention is made of Presbyterian orthodoxy as fixed by the "standard of the General Assembly." Nor do I believe any such thought passed through the mind of this strong man, either at that time, or, later, when he added to his first gift two hundred thousand dollars more.

Not long before his death, while busying himself with "Morgan Hall," his generous gift to Williams College, he said one day to a friend of mine: "I see now clearly that it has been the greatest mistake of my life that I have not engaged in this kind of thing before. It is one of the greatest pleasures I have ever experienced. And what a host of opportunities I have lost! If men of means could only realize what gratification is to be derived in this way, worthy and deserving objects would be fairly besieged with clamorous donors."

Mr. McCook, ten pages later, recurs, almost pathetically, to the distressing effect that must follow any other position than the one maintained by himself: "It would work an irreparable wrong upon those donors, such as James Brown, Esq., Governor Morgan, Russell Sage, Esq., Daniel B. Fayerweather, Esq., and others, who have contributed so largely to the endowment of Union Seminary upon the faith of this arrangement with the General Assembly and the orthodoxy of the seminary, which was intended to be secured thereby." All the benefactors named but one have passed far beyond the reach of such "irreparable wrong," Russell Sage, Esq., alone surviving. Why Mr. McCook selects this gentleman in particular from among a score or more of five-thousand-dollar contributors to the funds of Union Seminary as the special object of his sympathy, I do not know. But I marvel a little that, in his

eagerness to have Dr. Briggs' transfer to the chair of Biblical Theology vetoed, he shows no touch of sympathy for CHARLES BUTLER, now in his ninetieth year, the revered president, patriarch, and only surviving founder of Union Seminary, whose gift of one hundred thousand dollars endowed the chair, whose services to the institution cannot be valued with pure gold, and whose deliberate choice, right judgment, and Christian wisdom would be stamped by such veto with the stigma of disapproval on the part of the highest judicatory of the Presbyterian Church.

I have time barely to cull a few more samples of the ecclesiastical wisdom, which marks this extraordinary brief:

"The SOLE OBJECT of Union Theological Seminary is to uphold and teach the Presbyterian standards" (p. 15).

"Upon questions of orthodoxy the directors, individually and as a Presbyterian body, are SUBJECT *to the General Assembly*" (p. 16).

"The Assembly merely sets a standard of orthodoxy, and the corporation, *wishing to be* ORTHODOX, agree to appoint no agent of a certain class who does not *come up to it*" (p. 18).

"The standard of orthodoxy for the seminary, and for all Presbyterians and Presbyterian institutions, must be *set* by the General Assembly. What is more proper, therefore, than a contract providing that all appointees to the high and responsible office of a professor in such a seminary shall be measured by this standard?" (p. 17).

Surely, if these sayings are true, things are sadly topsy-turvy both in Union Seminary and in the Presbyterian Church.

(*f*). *The Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries: its report, and the action of the Assembly.*

The one hundred and third General Assembly of the

Presbyterian Church in the United States of America met at Detroit, Michigan, in the Fort street Presbyterian Church, of which the Rev. Dr. Wallace Ratcliffe is pastor, on May 21, 1891. The Rev. Dr. William Henry Green, the distinguished professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature at Princeton, was chosen moderator. Dr. Green is held in the highest esteem and affection, all over the land, as a veteran in the service of Christian scholarship. Nothing could have been more fitting than his unanimous election. The organization of the Assembly is thus described by the correspondent of the New York *Tribune*, under date of May 22:

This is pre-eminently a conservative Assembly; more, it is a Princeton Assembly. The moderator is a Princeton man, the senior professor in that seminary; the stated clerk is a Princeton man, having been for a long time librarian of that institution; the chairman of the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries, Dr. Patton, is president of Princeton College, and it is to this committee that the report of Union Seminary is to be submitted. Friends and opponents of Dr. Briggs are already forming their opinions as to what action this committee will report in regard to the New York professor.

Dr. Green announced the standing committees this morning. There is no special significance in the appointments, except in that of the Committee on Theological Seminaries This is composed as follows: Ministers—Francis L. Patton, Princeton; William McKibbin, Cincinnati; John Lapsley, Danville; S. Bowden, Rochester; J. D. Hewitt, Emporia; J. K. Wright, Florida; T. R. Buber, Philadelphia; and M. A. Bronson, Detroit. Elders—S. M. Breckinridge, St. Louis; P. McDavitt, Chicago; E. W. C. Humphrey, Louisville; R. C. Totten, Pittsburgh; P. Doremus, Montclair, N. J.; M. J. Frick, Fort Dodge; R. McConnaughy, Nebraska City. It was said by those professing to know that this was a decid-

edly anti-Briggs committee, but Dr. Patton, its chairman, assured the *Tribune* correspondent that he did not know how the members stood on any special question that might come before them. They had apparently been chosen by Dr. Green because he knew their fitness for the work before them.

What ground there was, if any, for the charge, made at Detroit, that the moderator allowed himself to be unduly influenced in order to make the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries a decidedly "anti-Briggs" committee, I know not. Of the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries, I shall refer chiefly to the chairman. Had Dr. Patton, in view of the peculiarly delicate circumstances of the case, peremptorily declined the appointment, or, at the least, had he followed the example of Dr. Adams at Philadelphia in 1870, and requested the Assembly, as a personal favor, to excuse him from serving, he would have stood higher than he does to-day in the respect of the friends of Union Seminary, and, I cannot but think, in that also of the Christian scholarship of the country.

On May 27th Dr. Patton read the report of the committee, which was accepted and ordered to be printed. The report opened with an enumeration of sixty-three Presbyteries which had overtured the General Assembly respecting the recent utterances of Dr. Briggs. It also refers to the report of the directors of the Union Theological Seminary to the General Assembly respecting the transfer of Dr. Briggs to the chair of Biblical Theology. The report then proceeds thus:

On the 20th of January, 1891, Dr. Briggs delivered an inaugural address on the authority of the Holy Scriptures which has been the subject of some criticism, and which is the occasion of the recommendations which your committee feel constrained to make to the Assembly. In making these recommendations, your committee feel that they are acting

in the discharge of a delicate duty. The matter with which they have been called to deal bears in a very important way upon the purity and peace of our Church. The interest of the Union Theological Seminary should be most carefully considered, and great respect should be had for the judgment of those who, as directors and as members of its faculty, are administering its affairs. The committee feel, moreover, that while the Assembly has not been officially informed, the Presbytery of New York has taken steps that look toward a prosecution of Dr. Briggs on the charge of heresy; that well-known facts should be so far recognized as to secure from the Assembly the protection of the good name of Dr. Briggs in the discussion of the question that will come before the Assembly, through this report, and also to prevent any expression of opinion on the part of this Assembly that could be justly regarded as prejudgment of the case that will soon, as it now appears, assume the form of a judicial process in the Presbytery of New York. It cannot be too carefully observed that the question before this Assembly is not whether Dr. Briggs, as a Presbyterian minister, has so far contravened the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith as to have made himself liable to a judicial censure, but whether, in view of the utterances contained in the inaugural address, already referred to, and the disturbing effect which they have produced throughout the Church, the election of Dr. Briggs to the chair of Biblical Theology in Union Theological Seminary should be disapproved. Your committee have examined the law of the Church regarding the relation of the General Assembly to the theological seminaries under its care. The relation of the Assembly to the Union Theological Seminary, so far as the appointment of professors is concerned, is embodied in the following statement taken from page 390 of the New Digest.

Having cited the statement referred to, the report continues, as follows:

It appears, then, that, according to the items of the compact quoted above, the directors of the Union Theological Seminary have conceded to the Assembly the right to veto the appointment of professors, and that an election is complete unless vetoed by the next Assembly following the election. Your committee would have been disposed to recommend that the report of the directors of Union Theological Seminary to this Assembly, so far as it referred to the transfer of Dr. Briggs to the chair of Biblical Theology, be referred to the next Assembly, if such a disposition of the matter had been possible ; but the Assembly has clearly no power to postpone action. The control of the Church over the election of Dr. Briggs ceases with the dissolution of this present Assembly. Your committee are constrained, therefore, to say that in their judgment it is the duty of the Assembly to disapprove of the appointment of Dr. Briggs to the Edward Robinson chair of Biblical Theology in Union Theological Seminary.

Your committee desire to say, moreover, that while they are clear in their judgment that the Assembly has the right to veto the appointment of Dr. Briggs to the chair of Biblical Theology, it is possible to impose a meaning upon the apparently unambiguous phraseology of the compact between the General Assembly and the directors of the Union Theological Seminary, that would lead to a different conclusion. Fairness also requires us to say that the Assembly is one of the parties of the compact that it is called upon to construe. While your committee are of the opinion that the compact in question did not contemplate the distinction between the election of a person to be a professor and the appointment of one already a professor to the work of a certain department of instruction, it cannot be denied that such a distinction exists ; the one act conferring status, the other only assigning duties. The seemingly irregular course of the directors of the Union Theological Seminary, whereby Dr. Briggs was inducted into office before the Assembly had

been advised of his appointment, is doubtless to be attributed to their mode of construing their contract with the General Assembly. While your committee are sure that the Assembly will not, and should not, admit its right of disapproval is restricted to the original election of a person to a professorship of Biblical Theology in that Seminary, and while they are of the opinion that, acting according to the light it now has, the Assembly cannot but disapprove of the appointment of Dr. Briggs to the professorship of Biblical Theology in that Seminary, they are nevertheless of the opinion that, in the interests of the mutual relations of confidence and cordial respect subsisting between the Union Theological Seminary and the General Assembly, it would be eminently proper for the Assembly to appoint a committee to confer with the directors of the Union Theological Seminary in regard to the relations of said Seminary to the General Assembly, and to report to the next General Assembly. The committee, therefore, recommend the adoption of the following resolutions :

I. *Resolved*, That in the exercise of its right to veto the appointment of professors in Union Theological Seminary, the General Assembly hereby disapproves of the appointment of the Rev. Chas. A. Briggs, D.D., to the Edward Robinson professorship of Biblical Theology in that Seminary, by transfer from another chair in said Seminary.

II. *Resolved*, That a committee, consisting of eight ministers and seven ruling elders, be appointed by the General Assembly to confer with the directors of Union Theological Seminary in regard to the relations of said Seminary to the General Assembly, and to report to the next General Assembly.

Before considering the report of the committee I wish to call attention to the statement of the chairman on reading it.

I would like to say that this committee have felt the responsibility that has been placed upon them ; that they have

not felt at liberty to divide this responsibility with any one; that they have studiously avoided consulting with any one who may have been supposed to have preconceived opinions on either side of the question; and having reached our conclusions, we present them to the Assembly for such action as the Assembly in its wisdom may see fit to take.

Is this not equivalent to saying that they deliberately refused to seek, or to receive, any light from anybody in reference to the momentous question which they were appointed to consider? If so, it is a confession that, in my opinion, reflects anything but credit upon the committee. Were these fifteen commissioners already omniscient when they shut themselves up in committee? Would their minds henceforth of necessity be biased, or misled, by any addition to their knowledge touching the Union Seminary and Dr. Briggs? I say nothing about the other "side"; but so far as the Union Seminary was concerned, it had good right to be heard before that committee, if it desired or cared to do so. Three of its directors were commissioners to the Assembly, Drs. Parkhurst, Dickey, and White. Of Dr. Parkhurst I cannot speak. Dr. Dickey has repeatedly stated that he offered, as a member of the Union board of directors, to give the committee any information in his power; not "preconceived opinions," but simple *information*. Dr. White made the same offer, both orally and in writing, and he was assured by Dr. Patton that the committee would be glad to hear him. He fully expected to be heard; but neither he nor Dr. Dickey were ever sent for or asked to appear. The committee "studiously avoided" consulting with him.

And, pray, who is Erskine N. White, that he should be treated in that manner? He is, as his honored father was before him, one of the most candid, judicious, and clear-sighted, as he is also one of the best, men in the Presbyterian Church. He was sent to the Assembly

because the whole Presbytery of New York knew him to be such a man. He insisted upon declining the appointment, moved thereto in part no doubt by reason of his exacting duties as secretary of the Assembly's Board of Church Erection, and partly, it may be, by reason of the somewhat delicate position in which the case of Dr. Briggs might place him, should he take part in its discussion. Hearing of his purpose, I joined Dr. Hastings in urging him not to decline. "You need take no part in the discussion of Dr. Briggs' case," we said to him, "but you know all about our Seminary affairs. You know the mind and temper of the board; you have the confidence of the whole Church. You can explain things; you can give needed information. Go, by all means." He yielded, and when he got to Detroit found his information "studiously avoided." Was it because, forsooth, he "might be supposed to have preconceived opinions"? Surely, this is not the spirit of fairness that ought to rule a leading committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, when dealing with a question that involves the professional standing and character of one of her most distinguished ministers!

But this slight put upon the three directors of Union Seminary, who were commissioners to the Assembly, was only a prelude to a far greater slight put upon the Seminary itself. Had Union Seminary belonged to the General Assembly and been subject to its authority as Princeton, for example, was and is, such treatment would still have been open to criticism. But Union Seminary, as we have seen, is not subject to the authority of the General Assembly. That body is in no sense its patron or the fountain of any of its powers. It stands, and has always stood, upon its own independent foundation. The single tie which in 1870 by its own free act connected it with the General Assembly, by its own free act it can sever at any moment

"for good and sufficient reasons." It is true that the report of the committee distinctly recognizes the fact that Union Seminary was a party in the case and had rights of its own as over against the Assembly. And yet the report recommended an *ex parte* decision of the vital question at issue without consulting in the least Union Seminary. The consultation was to come after the matter had been practically, and so far as that Assembly was concerned, irrevocably settled.

The exposition of the case in the report, more fully given in Dr. Patton's speeches and in those of other members of the committee, is remarkable for the manner in which it utterly ignores the deliberate action and testimony of the board of directors of Union Seminary, as also the carefully prepared statement of its Faculty. These were not, it is true, officially made known to the Assembly. But neither was the action of the Presbytery of New York, looking to a judicial process in the case of Dr. Briggs; and yet the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries kept that action constantly in mind in framing their report, and urged the Assembly to do so in considering it. Why was not the Assembly informed in this report of the exact position taken both by the Board of directors and by the Faculty of the Seminary? Why was not the Assembly distinctly told that the Board, by a unanimous vote and after careful investigation, had virtually pronounced the charges against Dr. Briggs unfounded, and that the Faculty of the institution had done the same thing? Was this solemn testimony also "studiously avoided" on the ground that it consisted of "preconceived opinions"?*

*The action of the Board in establishing the new chair and transferring Dr. Briggs to it, Dr. Frazer's charge, the resolutions of the Board of directors sustaining and promis-

As to the second recommendation of the committee, Dr. Erskine pointed out its real character in his very sensible comment upon it. Here is what he said:

It is proposed that we appoint a committee and go and hold a conference with the Union Seminary directors in regard to Dr. Briggs' relation to that Seminary, and to give them some advice. Mr. Moderator, what authority have we for that? Where have we any authority in regard to Union Seminary, excepting that which is embraced in the compact between that Seminary and us in the articles of agreement which were adopted in the year 1870 in the General Assembly at Philadelphia? And where have we any authority to go to them and advise with them, to do anything outside of the compact? None whatever. This proposition is a misleading proposition. It would have us surrender the only authority we have in regard to the instructions which are given to our candidates for the ministry in Union Seminary, and to assume an authority that does not belong to us. If we do so, we just allow ourselves to be misled and outwitted. The only control as an Assembly that we have over the theological seminary—I mean directly, except through the Synod and the Presbytery where we may reach ministers and elders—is embraced in that compact which has been entered into between the General Assembly and our theological seminaries, and the power that we have is the power of disapproval in regard to a professor that has been elected; and if you surrender that power, you surrender all the controlling power that you have in regard to the instructions that are given in these seminaries. Suppose you adopt this substitute; suppose you appoint your most prominent, most influential and wisest representatives. You go there and make your propositions. Why, they will receive you very cordially

ing to stand by Dr. Briggs, and also the statement of the Faculty, will all be found in the Appendix.

and politely, and say: "Gentlemen, we will take this into consideration; we will take time to consider this. We are obliged to you; we shall treat it with great respect and great courtesy." And they will take it into consideration, and what will be the result? You can all anticipate it. The majority of the directors in that theological seminary have sat upon this question again and again. There is a minority in that board with whom you might deal if you had the power, and they had the power; but the majority of that board of directors have acted upon this, and they have expressed their approval and their confidence in the views held by the person in question. And so if we were to go into this arrangement it would be vetoing the great issue. It would be surrendering the power that we have, and it would be putting you in a position just to be treated with simple courtesy by that board. You have no authority over them, and I don't know that they have any authority to carry out the proposition that is made.

Dr. Erskine was heard by the Assembly with not a little impatience, but this part of his speech, at least, seems to me to show that he understood the subject far better than some of his more eloquent brethren. His common-sense view of the relations of the Assembly to the directors of the Union Seminary may very well be compared with that expressed, or implied, by Dr. Patton, for example, in the following passages:

We have recognized that as a judge we are bound to construe, and we have recognized that as a party Union Seminary claim that their rights have been infringed by our construction, and if they see fit they can take us into the civil courts for a judicial and authoritative interpretation of this compact. Now we understand that you intend to take us into the courts. Well, brethren, is that the best course to pursue? Can't we talk the matter over? It is possible, you know, that you may be wrong. Is it not possible, therefore,

that they may come around? You might elect a man as professor of Elocution, and then transfer him to the chair of Theology. Isn't it possible that the directors will feel that the Assembly was right, after all? Why, certainly. On the other hand, isn't it possible that your committee would change their view, and that they would recommend the next Assembly to reverse the judgment of this Assembly? Isn't that possible? Why, of course it is possible; all things are possible. [Laughter and applause.] That would be a representative committee—eight ministers and seven elders, composed of the best men, the wisest lawyers, and to such a committee would we intrust this duty. Isn't it possible that both parties, in their inability to change their views, may say: "Well, we do not want to go to the courts. We remember what Paul said about prosecuting these matters before the heathen court." But cannot the General Assembly on the report of this committee and the board of directors of Union Seminary agree to refer the constitutional interpretation of this old compact, which is liable to come up and be a source of disturbance in years to come—refer it, not to this committee, not to the board of directors of Union Seminary, but to some Christian men outside, known for their wisdom, praised for their fairness, and saying on our part as a General Assembly, while they say on their part as a board of directors, "Dear brethren, we are perfectly willing to let any fair-minded set of men arbitrate this question"? These are the possibilities in the case.*

The debate upon the report opened on May 28th, and on May 29th, late in the afternoon, the vote was taken. It resulted in the adoption of the resolutions of the committee

* These quotations, as all others, from the speeches, made in the Assembly, are taken from the revised reports of the N. Y. *Tribune*, printed in pamphlet form under the title, *The Presbyterian Faith.*

by the overwhelming majority of 447 to 60. On the afternoon of May 28th Judge Breckinridge, a commissioner from St. Louis, at the moment of closing a speech in favor of the report, dropped dead in the presence of the whole Assembly. This startling incident, following so quickly upon the almost equally sudden death of the Rev. Henry J. Van Dyke, D.D., professor-elect to the chair of Systematic Theology in Union Seminary—a noble man and one of the foremost leaders in the Presbyterian Church—tended naturally to deepen the serious feeling which already pervaded the Assembly. While a few appear to have been in a different mood, the great body of commissioners, both ministers and elders, were very much impressed with the gravity of the situation.

It is not needful for my purpose to dwell long upon the speeches that were made. Much of the discussion, however able, was yet quite irrelevant. Much of it consisted in what is called beating about the bush. The first and fundamental point, namely, the question of *jurisdiction*, was hardly touched upon except in the report of the committee. With regard to this question, the minority were handicapped and tongue-tied from the outset. Their case was simply given away, and, strangely enough, by a director of Union Theological Seminary.*

* "The technical distinction, if any exists, between the appointment of a professor to a newly-founded chair and a transfer from one chair to another, *need not be discussed*, as it is stated by Dr. Dickey that the directors of Union Seminary, at their last meeting in May, *unanimously voted not to plead this distinction.*"—Remarks by John J. McCook, p. 9. How Dr. Dickey's memory or hearing came to be so at fault, I am not able to say. His course at Detroit was in a high degree frank and manly, and all his friends know him to be incapable of stating what he did not believe to be true. The

After this the friends of Dr. Briggs had nothing to do but to oppose the adoption of the report as best they could; either directly, or by urging Dr. Logan's amendment or Dr. Worcester's substitute, both of which contemplated the postponement of final action to the next Assembly. The distinction between an original election and a transfer, however, having been waived, the advocates of a veto had it all their own way. And their own way consisted in two things: first, to assert very positively that Dr. Briggs ought to be vetoed; and second, that he must be vetoed now or never. The latter point was urged with great solemnity and most impressive reiteration. "We are under obligation," said Mr. McCook, "as honest men, as Christian men, to carry out in its exact terms all the provisions of that compact, and we cannot, we dare not, postpone action. We must act now and before the adjournment of this Assembly, or the right to disapprove is lost FOREVER." Dr. Patton was equally emphatic as to the "now or never," giving as a reason how *he* should feel if threatened with a veto in the indefinite future. Here is what he said:

The question is whether we have the right to veto. I think we have. Very well, suppose we have that right, how

following note is from Mr. E. M. Kingsley, the recorder of Union Seminary:

The Rev. Dr. Dickey's memory was at fault concerning the action of the directors at their meeting of May 12th. At that meeting the Executive Committee presented a report which in substance deemed it unwise to assume in advance that the General Assembly would misconceive the extent of its prerogative; and in any event it was better at this time not to raise an issue by the sending up of a resolution upon the distinction between an "appointment" and a "transfer." This report, after discussion, was laid on the table, giving way to a motion which led to the series of questions submitted to and answered by Professor Briggs.

long does that right last? One General Assembly has said that it can last only during the Assembly immediately following the election of the professor. Very well, I think that is a good rule. It may seem a singular thing for me to play the role of an advocate of freedom [laughter], but I am. I am a professor. I have the prejudices of my class, and I tell you that, in the name of that class, I will protest against the right of an Assembly to hold the threat of a veto over me for a dozen years in succession. They have their chance once, and if they don't veto my appointment then, they ought not to have the chance four or five years hence. Suppose you admit that you can postpone this veto. By and by some other professor will be saying something that is not right, as we think, and we shall say, "Let us go and veto him. We did not veto him then, but we will do it now." Who is safe? I tell you it is in the interest of freedom; it is in the interest of a proper freedom that you should not allow that it is possible to postpone the veto. You have to do it now, or not at all. Very well. Now, then, you have the right to veto, and if you veto, you must veto now.

A veto, after all, is a terrible thing to be threatened with! It seems to have made the chairman of the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries himself squirm to think of being the possible subject of it. Theological freedom, too, may be at stake; and theological freedom, the proper liberty of a Christian scholar and teacher, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, is a very serious matter. If it must be done, let it be done quickly and put the man out of his misery. Precisely so; but who would have guessed it from other parts of this speech?

But even admitting, for the moment, that the Assembly had a right to veto Dr. Briggs' transfer, is it true that *Now* or *Never* was the absolute condition of its exercise? Nothing could be further from the truth. The rule adopted by the Assembly, that the veto power must be used, if at all,

by the Assembly to which the election is reported, formed no part of the agreement of 1870, but was suggested by Auburn a year later. Had Auburn and Lane been consulted, as they should have been, and no doubt would have been but for the manner in which Union was hurried up by pressure from Princeton, such a rule would probably have been agreed upon by all the three New School institutions, acting in concert. Although a very sensible rule, it was yet in the nature of a mere by-law, belonging to the administrative functions of the Assembly, and in such an exigency might have been suspended without the slightest impropriety. But the leaders of the Assembly—not to speak with any disrespect—seem to have had "compact," as well as the veto of Dr. Briggs, "on the brain," as the phrase is, and so a simple rule of fairness and prudence, with which, however, Union Seminary had nothing to do, took on, in their reasoning, the color and rigidity of a law of the Medes and Persians which changeth not! A good deal in the whole matter impels one to say with Faust,

—der casus macht mich lachen,

but nothing, I think, like this Now or Never plea.

The Assembly then, it is plain, was fatally misled by the Now or Never plea. That plea was based upon a sheer mistake. But it served its purpose quite as well as if it had been based upon an opinion of Chief-Justice Marshall, or upon the latest decision of the United States Supreme Court. It deluded the Assembly into just the right state of mind for the stern work in hand—vetoing Dr. Briggs. See how skilfully Dr. Patton put the case:

> We are here; the presbyteries have sent us here, and the report of the Union Theological Seminary has brought this question right up to the bar of every man's conscience, and

you cannot avoid it, and you dare not avoid it. I do not use the word "dare" in an unkind sense at all, I simply use it in the moral sense. There we are. Now for us not to express technical disapproval is for us to express technical approval. And it is not a matter of reflection upon Union Seminary, or a matter of sentiment or regard for their feelings, or a matter of how much disturbance this is going to occasion the Church, but it is a question as to the discharge of a solemn duty at the bar of your conscience and of mine, here and now. Then I think that every man of us will agree that the question is here. It is here. We must say, seeing that we have a right to veto, and seeing that we can never veto, if we do not do it now, we must say whether or no there is occasion for the veto. Now is there an occasion for veto?

Could he have got his hearers just where he wanted them more adroitly? They were in exactly the "solemnized" mood and posture of thought to hear most attentively his answer to the question, "Now is there occasion to veto?" No wonder, as the Detroit reporter said, they listened "spell-bound." This solemn, reiterated plea, "Now or Never," coupled with the "compact" plea, carried all before it. The only wonder is how sixty commissioners kept cool enough to vote against vetoing Dr. Briggs. I am really afraid I myself should have vetoed Dr. Briggs, had I been a commissioner. As to the skilful way in which the "compact" plea was handled, who can fail to admire it? The chairman of the Committee on Theological Seminaries took "the compact" under his special care and guardianship. He was very jealous of the slightest interference with it, even by so honored and learned an ecclesiastic as Dr. Moore. Hear him:

If we are going to veto under the terms of the compact, we must veto in the terms of the compact.

Dr. Moore (the Permanent Clerk): "Excuse me, Doctor, a

moment. I want to call attention to the fact that while the first of that is the compact, the second is simply the decision of the General Assembly."

Dr. Patton: "That is not relevant to my remarks. And so I go back to my statement, in spite of the *instruction* that I have received, and I say that if you intend to veto under the terms of the compact, you must veto in the terms of the compact. Now, what are the terms of the compact? Now, when you talk of disapproving 'for the present' you depart from your compact, and you have simply expressed your oral dislike and put the stigma of your moral disapproval upon the case, but you have done nothing."

I tried to count up the number of times in which "compact" occurs in Dr. Patton's speech, but my memory failed me. How extremely interested, not to say entertained, William Adams, George W. Musgrave, Henry B. Smith, Jonathan F. Stearns, and Edwin F. Hatfield would have been in listening to this exposition of "the compact of 1870," by so adroit an ecclesiastic as the President of Princeton College!

The most striking point in the chairman's discussion of the question, whether there was occasion for veto, is "kindness" to Dr. Briggs. It is "kindness" to Dr. Briggs that forced him to turn a deaf ear to all entreaties for "reasons." "Well, but," it is said, "couldn't you state some reasons without involving the question of heresy?" "Yes," I said, "I could." "Well," said some one, "you have been working in theology; couldn't you draft such a report?" "Yes," I said, "I might." But "kindness" to Dr. Briggs forbade it. Here are some passages about Dr. Briggs:

When your feelings cool down, brethren, you will see that this is a much *kinder* thing than you think, and it is not so cold, either; we *made* it cold, but it is *not* so cold. So far as Dr. Briggs is concerned, I will yield to none of his

friends, not even the best, in my recognition of his learning, in my admiration of his industry, in my conviction concerning his piety. He is my friend. It is my privilege to call him so. I venture to hope that in spite of my relations to this debate he will not be unwilling to reciprocate my expression of the relationship between us. I wish to say that we have done this in the interest of kindness to Dr. Briggs. I would be unwilling for the Assembly to pass a resolution, in the full body of which there should be the stigma of a constitutional kind, that would affirm that Dr. Briggs' idiosyncrasies are such that he should not be a professor in a seminary. Why, a man's idiosyncrasies go with him through life, and I don't know but they go into the middle state, [laughter] and I am not willing to say that Dr. Briggs is not fit to be a professor in any seminary. I am not willing to say that he is not fit to be a professor in Union Seminary. Not at all. I said, "Brethren, it is not kind, it is not right for the Assembly, in its explicit utterance on the adoption of a report, to say a word that can be construed, even remotely, to the detriment of Dr. Briggs." That is why we did not give reasons, but it was not because we had no reasons. We had reasons.

Dr. Patton and his committee, then, had reasons. The reasons appear to have been as plentiful as blackberries. But nobody was the wiser for them. Nobody is the wiser for them to this day. Every now and then at Detroit they seemed, to be sure, on the very point of leaking out, both in the speeches of the chairman and in those of several members of his committee. In other speeches they not only leaked out, they came gushing out, explicit, frank, and unmistakable. I said that a good deal of the discussion at Detroit consisted in beating about the bush. In this the chairman surpassed all his brethren. The the logical agility and deftness with which he beat, and beat about, this par-

ticular bush of "no reasons" was something remarkable. He keeps saying, as it were:

> Fain would I, but I dare not; I dare, and yet I may not.

It appears, then, that while the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries had plenty of reasons—good, valid reasons, as they believed—for recommending the veto of Dr. Briggs' transfer, they purposely concealed these reasons, alike from the Assembly and from the Christian public. Nobody, I repeat, knew then, or knows to this day, unless privately informed by some member of the committee, what was the ground of the decision for which they are responsible to Christian scholarship, to history, and to God. They themselves acted, as they said, in the light of their own reason and conscience. They left the Assembly to act in the dark and adopt their decision on trust. If the President of the United States disapprove a bill passed by Congress, he is required to return the bill with his objections. If the Governor of New York disapprove of a bill passed by the Legislature, he sends it back with his reasons for vetoing it. And this is according to the true genius of republican liberty. Our American idea of free government abhors arbitrary, reasonless exercise of power. If the agreement of 1870 had given the General Assembly "the right of *peremptory* veto," as proposed in the letter of Dr. A. A. Hodge to Henry B. Smith, then, indeed, the recommendation of Dr. Patton's committee would have been in order. A *peremptory* veto is a veto that requires no explanation. It is like an edict of the Sultan—an arbitrary act, pure and simple. The American Presbyterianism, in which Union Seminary was born and nurtured, is not fond of such acts. It likes to give a good reason for what it does, as well as for what it believes. The power of intelligible, rational, Christian disapproval, not a *peremptory* veto, was the power conceded by Union Seminary in 1870.

Before passing from this topic I desire to add a word respecting the course of the chairman of the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries. When I wrote the article in *The Evangelist* of May 21st on the veto power, I purposely restrained myself, and carefully omitted to say what would be, in my judgment, the inevitable effects of a veto of Dr. Briggs' transfer. In this perhaps I erred; if so, it was in the interest of the peace of the Church. The crisis seemed to me serious enough to demand the utmost caution, not to say reticence, on the part of every friend of Union Seminary. Having expressed the opinion that the question about the veto power touched in *principle* all the other theological seminaries in the Presbyterian Church, I closed my article as follows:

> The General Assembly is shortly to convene and show its judgment upon the matter. Nor, for myself, have I any fear of the result. Many of the ablest, wisest, and best men in the Presbyterian Church, both of the ministry and eldership, will sit in that Assembly, and they will not be likely to countenance any hasty or unjust action.

This was my honest feeling and expectation. When, therefore, the result came my disappointment was all the keener, especially with regard to Dr. Patton. Although my acquaintance with him was slight, I had for many years admired his varied gifts and his remarkable power of swaying a popular assembly. His oft-expressed reverence for the character and memory of my bosom friend, Henry B. Smith, touched me in a very tender spot; and I had heard things related of him, privately, which won my sincere esteem. There are few men in the Presbyterian Church, perhaps there is not another one, of whom I could have honestly said just what in my letter to Dr. Field, in *The Evangelist* of June 11, I wrote of Dr. Patton. And what

is there written of him expresses so truly my feeling still, that I can only repeat it here:

He had an opportunity to speak a word and strike a blow for justice, for sacred scholarship, for reasonable liberty, both of thought and teaching, for the suppression of clamor as an ecclesiastical and theological force, and for the highest interests of Christian truth, which, like the shot fired by the "embattled farmers" at Lexington, would have been "heard round the world." Acting, I do not question, from a strong sense of duty to the Presbyterian Church, he failed to seize it; and he will be a fortunate man indeed, if Providence ever again entrusts to him such an opportunity.

(*g*). *Union Theological Seminary in its relations to Princeton.*

I have been connected with Union Seminary, either as director or professor, for about forty years, and during all that time my relations with Princeton have been of the friendliest character. Never have I failed to recognize the invaluable services rendered by her scholars and divines to the cause of Biblical learning and of sacred science in this country. Though trained in other schools of thought and of theological opinion, I have always found much to admire in her sturdy orthodoxy, in her fidelity to the teachings of the Westminster standards on the great questions of the church and the sacraments, in her homage to the authority of the inspired oracles, and in the fervor of her piety. The name of her "Old Dr. Alexander" was as familiar, and almost as dear, to my boyhood as the name of "Dr. Payson," or that of any other minister of Christ in New England. I might mention other names on her roll of saints of earlier and of later days, for whom I cherished, and still cherish, sentiments of unfeigned respect and affection. Who could have even a casual acquaintance with Dr.

Charles Hodge without beginning at once to love and revere him? And I say frankly that in his theology, as in that of Dr. Alexander, there was not a little that I preferred to not a little of the theology dominant in New England while I was a pastor there, or in the New School Presbyterian Church when I first came into it. But there were also certain features of Princeton theology and of the Old School ecclesiastical temper, which never attracted me in the least; some, indeed, which strongly repelled me. I used to think that Princeton was altogether too inclined to fancy that her theology was, and of right ought to be, the only authorized theology in the Presbyterian Church. Nor did reunion seem to me to cure her wholly of this fond notion.

I have ventured to speak of my personal relations to Princeton. So far as is known to me, the relations of Union Seminary to Princeton have been of the same friendly character; only in the case of one of her oldest directors and professors, the saintly Skinner, much more intimate. Dr. Skinner was a typical New School theologian, enthusiastic and whole-souled in his devotion to the New England and Puritan, in distinction from the Scottish, Scotch-Irish, and Swiss divinity. He held the writings of Baxter, Howe, Owen, Jonathan Edwards, and Albert Barnes in much greater esteem than the writings of Turretin and his school, whether in Scotland or America. And he bore upon his person the scars of many a sharp encounter in defense of his opinions, while preaching and fighting for his Master amidst the powerful foes who, in the second and third decades of the century, represented conservative Presbyterian orthodoxy at Philadelphia. But for all that, a very warm friendship existed between Dr. Skinner and Dr. Charles Hodge. They loved each other with the generous fervor of Christian brotherhood, and

when, in 1871, Dr. Skinner passed suddenly into the glory of that risen Redeemer whom he so adored, Dr. Hodge wrote thus to the Faculty of Union Seminary:

When your beloved and revered colleague, Dr. Thomas H. Skinner, was called away, I was ill in bed. I was not informed of his death for more than a week after its occurrence. I wish these facts to be known, because no person was under stronger obligation to stand at the grave of Thomas H. Skinner than myself; and few had better right to appear there as a mourner. For more than fifty-five years I knew, loved, and honored, and was loved and trusted by him. Of this he assured me, and no man ever doubted his sincerity.

You must excuse the personal character of this communication. I cannot forbear entering my claim to be counted among the oldest and most devoted of his friends. He was a man by himself. The union of high gifts with the most transparent, childlike simplicity of character gave him a peculiar position in the love and admiration of his friends.

Dr. Henry White studied theology at Princeton; but of his relations to that seminary in his later years I cannot speak. Nor do I know what were those of Edward Robinson, the great Biblical scholar.

Henry B. Smith had no early association with Princeton. As late as 1850, when he came to New York, the embittered feelings of 1837–8 were still rankling. Ecclesiastically and theologically, one might almost say, as it is written concerning the Jews and the Samaritans, Old School and New School "had no dealings with each other." I speak of my own recollections and experience. For years after I became pastor of the Mercer-street Presbyterian Church, the Old School ministers of New York—and such men as Spring, Potts, James W. Alexander, and Krebs were among them—neither called upon me nor I upon them. We never exchanged pulpits. We had no social

intercourse, except incidentally. I cared nothing for them except to esteem them, in a general way, as faithful ministers of Christ; and they, I presume, cared still less for me. The Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Episcopalians, attracted me much more than Old School Presbyterians. They never crossed the threshold of our Chi Alpha circle or of Union Seminary. It was the prevailing Presbyterian *atmosphere* of the day. I yielded to it, partly from temperament, partly because there seemed to be, theologically speaking, "a certain condescension" on the part of the Old School, as if its orthodoxy, especially as taught at Princeton, was the only standard orthodoxy; and that was not at all to my taste.

My impression is that this state of things influenced Professor Smith less than it did me. His sympathy with important features of Old School theology was, perhaps, deeper and more active than mine. And he far surpassed me in the feeling that not only was such a state of things wrong, but that it ought to be changed just as soon as possible. I do not think he had much intercourse with Princeton; and later, as is well known, he took decided ground in his Review and elsewhere against some of Dr. Hodge's views. But nothing petty or partisan was ever allowed to enter into the discussion. He was far above such a thing. He attended Dr. Hodge's semi-centennial in 1872, and, on behalf of Union Seminary, spoke with admiration of that great and good man. Here are a few sentences from his address on the occasion:

> It is only the accident of my being born two or three years earlier that prevents you from hearing some more eloquent representative of our institution, for *we are all here.* [Applause.] For the first time in America, we celebrate to-day the semi-centennial of a professor in a theological institution. It is a matter of sincere congratulation that

the merit is as incontestable as are the years. To speak on such an occasion is embarrassing; but, after all, this assemblage itself is the great speech of the occasion. All these ministers and men gathered from all parts of our land, from all parts of the world, are here to do honor to one most honorable name, to testify to the power and influence of a long and noble life consecrated to the highest welfare of our country, as well as to the service of the Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In comparison with such a life, I do not know what glory in peace or war can be called greater or more worthy of the highest style of manliness or manhood.

There is another circumstance about this celebration which we may well emphasize, and that is, that here we meet, as we so seldom can, to pay due honor also to theology, to see what theology is and means, and how it is needed for the highest welfare and true progress of the nation. Literature is spoken of every day, and appeals to all. Merely literary men live in a popular atmosphere, but theology must be studied in comparative seclusion. Its fruits are the fruits of mature years, and they come to be known in their full value only after a long lapse of time. In behalf of our Seminary, then, I would congratulate him whose name is on all our lips to-day, for the high honor to which he has been called, and for the eminent success vouchsafed to him. We offer to him the expression of our deep and unfeigned esteem and affection. May he yet many years live to receive the grateful tributes of the Church which he has always loved, and which loves him so well. And, above all, may he now and evermore be blessed with all spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ our Lord!

Dr. Adams' relations to Princeton, in his later years at least, were much closer and more pronounced. To him, as we have seen, Princeton was chiefly indebted for whatever of good she found in that veto power, which relieved her

of the necessity of having her professors elected by the General Assembly. The last person outside of his own family who saw Dr. Hodge before he departed was Dr. Adams. As the latter came to the bedside, Dr. Hodge took his hand and held it fast during the whole interview. Although too feeble to speak with his lips, by a silent pressure of the hand and with expressive eyes the dying theologian responded to the assurance how many there were who held him in their thoughts and hearts, and to comforting words of Holy Scripture.

Dr. Hitchcock stood upon substantially the same ground as Professor Smith with respect to Princeton. In New England he had sympathized rather with the Old than the New School of Congregational orthodoxy; and on coming to New York, while entering with loyal devotion into the service of the New School, his generous culture, large views, and catholic spirit enabled him to do full justice to whatever was best in the Old School. I can recall no word from his lips, in public or in private, between 1855, when he came to New York, and the day of his death, which was not most friendly to Princeton. Of Dr. Shedd I might use still stronger language, were it needful.

I am not entitled to speak for my present colleagues in the Faculty of Union Seminary. They are quite able to speak for themselves. But if a single one of them has not a conscience void of offense toward Princeton, the reason is unknown to me. The only possible exception would be Dr. Briggs, and he is now beyond the sea.* What his feelings are I can only conjecture by considering what my own would be, were I in his place. He no doubt believes, as his friends believe, that the veto of his transfer to the chair

* This paper was prepared last summer, while Dr. B. was in Europe.

of Biblical Theology was, primarily and mainly, the result of what may justly be called Princeton influence in the Church. Had that powerful influence, whether exerted from far or near, been put forth in opposition to the veto, or had it only remained quiet, there is no reason to doubt that Dr. Briggs would have been spared the stigma which the General Assembly at Detroit placed upon his brow.

But while unable to say what is Dr. Briggs' present state of mind with regard to Princeton, I know what it was during the ten years in which, as principal founder and senior editor of *The Presbyterian Review*, he came into such intimate relations with that seminary through his successive co-editors, Drs. Aiken, Hodge, Patton, and Warfield. At his earnest request I consented to serve on the executive committee of the Presbyterian Review Association. He consulted me, both as a friend and as a member of that committee, year in and year out. He talked to me with absolute freedom respecting the Review, its policy, his colleagues, and his own plans, labors, and trials in its management. He was restrained by no fear that anybody would ever know what he said to me. I do not believe he ever hesitated to give vent in my ear to his inmost thoughts, or doubts and suspicions, if he had any, about Princeton. And yet as I look back over the record in my memory of those ten years I see nothing dishonoring to Christian scholarship; nothing that did not betoken a man whose devotion to what he regarded as sound doctrine, the best interests of the Presbyterian Church, the cause of sacred learning, and, above all, allegiance to the King of Truth, was an absorbing passion. Again and again I said to myself, "How this man loves to work for his Master and his Master's kingdom!" To be sure, Dr. Briggs did, now and then, say or write things about certain features of Princeton divinity and biblical scholarship which seemed to me needlessly severe. The

tone of his article in *The Presbyterian Review* on the Old Testament Revision and Revisers, for example, I disliked exceedingly and frankly told him so. Such a tone, I said, is against all my convictions as to the right temper of Christian scholarship; it hurts my feelings. And he allowed me to say this without the slightest sign of irritation.

But to speak unadvisedly with one's lips, or one's pen, is really no new thing in the annals of American Presbyterianism. Dr. Briggs did not invent it. If, as is charged, he has sinned in that line, his sins are venial in comparison with those of not a few eminent Presbyterians in the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth. How some Old and New School men used to "talk back" to each other! And it always did seem to me that, as a general rule, an Old School Presbyterian, when once fairly aroused and "on the war-path," so to say, left a New School Presbyterian, however gifted and advanced in that method, far behind. I have expressed my honest respect, not to say admiration, for Dr. Robert J. Breckinridge. But what shall be said of the tone and manner in which he was wont to express his mind about his New School brethren—and, as for that, his Old School brethren, also, when they differed with him—in 1834, 1837–8, at the Philadelphia Union Convention in 1867, and in the General Assembly at Albany in 1868? What could have been more provoking than his biting criticism upon the noble report of Dr. Adams and Dr. Beatty on reunion—a report so seasoned with the meekness of wisdom—pronouncing it unworthy of the great Presbyterian Church and "deficient in style, literature, grammar, and rhetoric from one end to the other"!

The simple fact is, that Presbyterians now and then are not only, as they have often been called, the Lord's "silly people," but they are also the Lord's fighting people.

Their Calvinism makes them bold and determined, but it tends also to make them somewhat pugnacious and domineering. They hold a high doctrine of original and indwelling sin; and I have wondered whether, in His permissive will, God did not allow an unusually large share of the latter to remain in them in attestation of their doctrine, as also to keep down their pride of orthodoxy.

When I consider what have been Dr. Briggs' services to the Presbyterian Church, and to Christian scholarship; how far they exceed in variety, amount, and quality those of most other Presbyterian scholars of his own day, and with what fidelity and devotion he has rendered them, I am little in the mood to complain of his faults or to hear others do so. As to his relations to Princeton during the ten years to which I have referred there is no ground whatever, I repeat, so far as my knowledge goes, to speak of him otherwise than in terms of respect and praise. Upon his severing his connection with *The Presbyterian Review* the sense of his services, entertained by the Review Association, was expressed in the following letter addressed to him by Dr. Aiken, under date of Princeton, Oct. 18, 1889:

At the meeting of the Review Association in New York, on Wednesday last, it was unanimously and heartily voted that the thanks of the Association be given to you for the many important services which you have rendered the Association during the ten years of its history. We recognize your conspicuous and invaluable service in the starting of the Association and the *Review*, and, in many ways, in maintaining both. We recognize the great benefit we have derived from your deep interest in the *Review*, your indefatigable energy and industry, your wide acquaintance with men on both sides of the water, your patience in looking after details, and your wide outlook over the field which the *Review* was aimed to cover.

And the embarrassments of various kinds which appear

now to have brought to an end the work of the *Review*, make us only the more eager to express to you our sense of what we owe you. It was on my motion that this vote was passed,—but it needed only the motion to secure the instant and unanimous assent of all present. The absent, we are sure, would have concurred with us. I was requested to communicate with you, freely, without any form of words proposed by me, or given me to transcribe. It gives me personally real pleasure to be the organ of the Association in conveying to you the knowledge of this action.

The members of the Executive Committee of the Review Association at this time were William M. Paxton, Charles A. Aiken, Benjamin B. Warfield, Thomas S. Hastings, George L. Prentiss, and Marvin R. Vincent.

It is hardly needful to say more of the friendly relations of Union to Princeton. On the part of Union, for forty years at least, I can testify that, so far as I know, not only has no hostile sentiment toward Princeton been cherished by her, but habitually and on principle has she abstained from saying or doing aught that might stir up jealousy, strife, or rivalry between the two institutions. Her record in this respect is clear and unimpeachable. Had Union Seminary been established a few years earlier, the case might have been different. In a letter dated New York, June 5, 1827, Dr. John Holt Rice, one of the wisest and best men in the Presbyterian Church of that day, writes:

While all the brethren appear to regard me with great personal affection, neither of the parties are entirely cordial to me. The Princeton people apprehend that I am approximating to Auburn notions; and the zealous partisans of New England divinity think me a thorough-going Princetonian. So it is! And while there is much less of the unseemly bitterness and asperity which brought reproach upon the Church in past times, I can see that the spirit of party has struck

deeper than I had even supposed. And I do fully expect that there will be either a strong effort to bring Princeton under different management, or to build up a new seminary in the vicinity of New York, to counteract the influence of Princeton. One or the other of these things will assuredly be done before long, unless the Lord interpose and turn the hearts of the ministers.

Fortunately, Union Seminary was founded nine years later, and with no design whatever antagonistic to Princeton. Such, then, being her record from the beginning until now, can it be thought strange that the course of Princeton at Detroit was regarded by the friends of Union, in view especially of 1870, with most painful surprise? or that they felt deeply offended and injured by it? Is it strange if it inflicted one of those wounds, that are apt to rankle long and are very hard to cure? "I doubt," writes an old and devoted friend of Union Seminary, "I doubt whether you fully realize the depth, or extent, of the indignant feeling which the course of Princeton at Detroit aroused among thousands of thoughtful men and women, throughout the country. It was, and still is, largely a suppressed feeling—suppressed partly, perhaps, by reason of its very intensity and in part for the sake of the peace of the Church—but a feeling which, you may rest assured, is not going to be allayed by any pious truisms. It is not now the case of Dr. Briggs chiefly—that is a mere occasion and passing incident—it is the honest conviction that vital principles of American Presbyterianism, as well as vital principles of justice and Christian liberty, are involved, which renders this feeling so deep and strong. As to Union Seminary, what a return she got for her services to Princeton in 1870! How would William Adams have felt, could he have foreseen it! I do not envy the President of Princeton College his part in this matter. Would his illustrious predecessor, the

venerable Dr. McCosh, ever have consented to act such part? It does not seem to me even thinkable.

"The union of the Old and New School Churches is generally regarded as one of the greatest events in the annals of American Presbyterianism. What was the agency of Princeton in bringing it about? Dr. Hodge from first to last was its strongest opponent. What was the agency of Union in bringing it about? Henry B. Smith was its foremost leader and advocate. By his memorable sermon at Dayton in 1864, by his editorials in *The Evangelist*, by the powerful articles in his *Review*, he more than any other man started, defended, and guided the movement. Without Henry B. Smith and such coadjutors, among the directors of Union Seminary, as William Adams, Jonathan F. Stearns, Edwin F. Hatfield, and William E. Dodge, I, for one, do not believe Reunion would have been accomplished even to this day. It had other very able New School advocates, whose services also were invaluable. And without such strong friends in the Old School branch as Drs. Beatty, Gurley, Musgrave, Monfort, Allison, and many others like them, it could not, of course, have been accomplished. But so far as reunion was a great blessing to the Presbyterian Church, the agency of Union in bringing it to pass entitles her, it seems to me, to lasting gratitude; certainly to treatment very different from that of which she has so often and in so many quarters been the subject during the past six months. Nor is it a small service that Union has rendered both to the Presbyterian Church and to Christian scholarship as a living centre of reasonable theological freedom and progress. 'I am not afraid to say that a new idea never originated in this Seminary,' was the remark of Dr. Hodge at his semi-centennial. That has never been the position of Union. She welcomes all new ideas, that 'swim into her ken' from the word of God or from the vast realm

of science. How many new 'ideas' originated in Union Seminary in the days of Henry B. Smith! But I weary you. I took up my pen simply to say that the feeling caused by the course of Princeton at Detroit, is really deeper and more widespread than even you appear to think. I may be wrong, but that is my opinion."

(*h*). *The action at Detroit in the case of Dr. Briggs as an eye-opener.*

The veto of Dr. Briggs was a veritable eye-opener. Its instantaneous effect was great; its ultimate effects are likely to be greater. In a moment, as by a flash of lightning, the agreement of 1870 was seen, as it had never been seen before. It was seen to involve alarming possibilities of harm to the Presbyterian Church, to free Christian scholarship, and to the cause of theological truth and progress. It was, probably, at once the cause and the subject of more anxious thought in one week after the vote at Detroit, than during all the previous twenty years. That vote revealed it as an arrangement full of explosive mischief. Instead of contributing to the "peace and prosperity of the Church," by promoting mutual confidence and love, it showed itself, of a sudden, as a stirrer up of strife and bitterness. It proved that the many disadvantages, infelicities, and perils, which, to those who took an active part in founding the Union Theological Seminary, appeared so serious in the election of professors by the General Assembly itself, were no less incident to the veto power in the election of professors, when exercised by the General Assembly. In other words, the action at Detroit demonstrated that the two principal grounds upon which the veto power had been conceded to the General Assembly by Union Seminary in 1870, were deceptive and untenable. The evils specially deprecated and to be guarded against by the concession of that power

have been sprung upon the Church in its very first exercise. With the best intentions in the world, both the Board of directors of the Union Seminary and the General Assembly greatly erred as to the effects which, sooner or later, would be caused by arming the Assembly with authority to forbid, year in and year out, at its absolute discretion, every election of a professor in every Presbyterian theological seminary in the United States.

For a time it may have served, as the ninth "concurrent declaration" of 1869 had been intended, "to allay the apprehensions of any who might imagine that the sudden accession and intermingling of great numbers [that is, the coming in of the New School branch] might overbear those who had hitherto administrated these seminaries which had been under the control of one branch of the Church. It was intended as a measure for the maintenance of confidence and harmony, and not as indicating the best method for all future time." As a measure for the maintenance of confidence and harmony during that critical period of transition from a divided to a reunited Church, it was, perhaps, of use. But time has long since allayed any apprehensions, which the Old School might have felt, of being overborne in the administration of their seminaries by a sudden accession of the New School to equal power in the General Assembly. Old School and New School are obsolete terms. And yet who can wonder that, in 1870, some "apprehensions," if not "jealousy," with regard to this matter still existed on the Old School side, especially at Princeton?

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, to return to my point, is a grand and powerful religious body. In its own proper sphere it is a mighty agency for building up and extending the kingdom of God on earth. But it is singularly unfitted to make the best possible choice, or to ascertain and forbid the unwise

choice, of a theological professor. The chances seem to me as ten to one that, in all ordinary cases, the choice of a professor in Princeton, or Auburn, or McCormick, or Union, or San Francisco, or any other seminary, will be far more wisely made by its own board of directors than by a popular assembly composed of some five hundred men, living thousands of miles apart, coming together for ten days, subject to numberless misleading influences through ignorance of the candidate, and restrained perhaps by only a feeble sense of direct personal responsibility in the case. Twenty votes in a board of directors, composed, as the boards of our theological seminaries usually are, of judicious, experienced, high-minded Christian men, stand for more, and are worth more, than five hundred votes in General Assembly. Of course, the best boards are liable also to commit mistakes. No device or method of election can insure against possible errors and imperfections of human judgment, whether it be the judgment of eight and twenty directors or of five hundred commissioners.

Personally, no man has better reason than I have to speak well of the General Assembly in this regard. I myself bear its *imprimatur* as "the standard of Presbyterian orthodoxy." Under the lead of that apostolic servant of Christ, Dr. Charles C. Beatty, the first General Assembly of the reunited Church, by a unanimous and rising vote, elected me to the chair of Systematic Theology in one of its most important seminaries; and upon my declining the call, re-elected me with similar unanimity in 1871. Never can I cease to feel grateful in remembrance of such uncommon kindness and honor; grateful also in memory of the special tokens of personal interest and good-will which I received from the layman so distinguished at once for his stanch Presbyterianism and his generosity, whose name the Seminary of the Northwest now bears.

I will now proceed to note some of the ways in which the action at Detroit, in the case of Dr. Briggs, may be regarded as an eye-opener.

(1). In disclosing the doubts and scruples respecting the agreement of 1870 which existed at the time, but had never, so far as I am aware, been made public. I refer more especially to Lane Seminary, which, like Union, was entirely independent of ecclesiastical control. An extract from a letter of the Rev. Henry A. Nelson, D.D., addressed to Hon. James R. Cox, of Auburn, and published in *The Evangelist* of June 25th, shows what was done at Lane and why it was done. Dr. Nelson was a member of the Joint Committee on Reunion, as well as a professor at Lane, and is known far and wide as an eminently wise and true man. Here is the extract:

Our Lane Seminary charter made its board of trustees a close corporation, empowered to fill vacancies in its own membership, and to appoint all professors and instructors, who should hold their chairs *at the pleasure of the board.* Hon. Stanley Matthews, afterward a justice of the United States Supreme Court, was consulted on the legal questions involved. He stated clearly and positively that the board of trustees, a corporate body, could not legally delegate any of its powers to the General Assembly or to any other body. Our board of trustees adopted the by-law (as its charter empowered it to do) in words like the following, as nearly as I remember :* "Every election of a professor in this institution shall be reported to the next General Assembly, and if the said Assembly shall by vote express its disapprobation of the election, the professorship in question shall be *ipso facto* vacant from and after such veto of the General Assembly; it being understood that in such case *it is not the pleasure of this*

* I give the resolution of the Lane Seminary board exactly as it was passed (*Moore's Digest*, p. 384).

board that such professor shall continue in office." Judge Matthews said that this by-law, being adopted by the board of trustees, could at any time be repealed by the board. The board could not divest itself of this power. But as long as it should keep that rule on its own book and govern itself by it, it would no doubt have all the moral effect which was sought for. No one of us imagined that it could have any further legal force or effect than was thus defined by that competent legal adviser.

Dr. E. D. Morris, now professor of Systematic Theology at Lane, occupied in 1870 the chair of Church History in that institution. Dr. Morris has long ranked among the ablest and most judicious writers in this country on questions of ecclesiastical law and polity. *The Evangelist* of July 23, 1891, contained a striking article from his pen, entitled "The Compact of 1870." The following are extracts from this article:

The writer does not hesitate to say at this point, that having occasion in 1871 to look into the matter of *legality*, so far as Lane was concerned, he was led to the conclusion that, in the eye of the civil law, this compact, excellent as it was in intention, was wholly unwarranted. Indeed it was questionable in his judgment whether it lay within the constitutional prerogative of the General Assembly to accept such a function if proffered to it, and the recent experience has appeared to him to give some degree of reasonableness to that doubt. But on the civil side of the matter, it must be ordinarily clear to any student of the charter of that institution, that its trustees are the sole and only party having, or that can have, or gain, any authority whatsoever in the appointment of those who, in whatever capacity, give instruction in it. These trustees are limited by but one condition, that such instructors shall be in good standing in the Presbyterian Church. But they have no right to go to the Assembly to inquire whether

such or such a teacher is in good standing, nor has the Assembly any power, by mere resolution, to declare the standing of any such person to be either good or bad. They might go to the records of some presbytery having jurisdiction, and inquire whether the person involved was *rectus in curia* there; but they could not commit to such a body the matter of approving or disapproving their choice of him as a teacher. In that choice they are absolutely and forever sovereign, with no chartered right to delegate their responsibility to, or even share it in any particular with any other body whatever. If the question were one of financial administration, no court in the land would justify these trustees in calling on the General Assembly to guide or to control them in the care of the funds and properties of that institution, and the same legal principle holds no less truly in the exercise of any other part of their corporate trust. The board of Lane Seminary is in every particular, and at all times, the official authority, and there can be no other.

Such was the view which the writer was compelled to take twenty years ago, so far as one of these three seminaries was concerned, and the recent discussions have served to make it evident that the trustees of Auburn and Union are by the charters of those institutions in a very similar position. Looking at the matter as one of legal principle simply, to be determined judicially, is it not clear that these boards of trust could not hand over to a General Assembly a right of ultimate control over any of the endowments committed to their keeping? And is it not just as clear that they could not ask a General Assembly to create any new department, or prescribe any change in the methods of instruction, or to choose or even nominate a professor for any work within these institutions? All such matters are committed by law to these several boards, and to them alone, in the exercise of their corporate sovereignty, and there is ground for the query whether their failure to exercise such prerogative in the way prescribed by their respective charters would not ultimately

work a forfeiture of the funds intrusted to their keeping. No such board could, for example, discharge their corps of instructors and close the institution indefinitely, without becoming subject to civil suit, even though it should resolve to commit its endowments meanwhile to the care and keeping of the General Assembly. And the same principle must apply to all their acts.

Turning from the question of legality to that of *expediency* and *desirableness*, we enter a field more difficult of discussion, yet one where a dispassionate examination will be likely to lead thoughtful men into substantial agreement. The compact is a good one so long as there is no occasion to apply it. As a simple expression of good-will and cordial confidence between the parties it is admirable. But the moment a case arises, in which the judgment of any of these boards of trust goes in one direction, and that of an Assembly goes in another, and the Assembly overrules such board by vetoing its action and displacing a teacher, whom, in the exercise of its chartered prerogatives and its corporate wisdom, it has chosen, there will always be trouble; *it cannot be otherwise.* If the Assembly acts without giving any reasons, simply interposing its final negative in the case, it exposes itself at once to the charge of arbitrariness, and to those immediately affected by its action, that action inevitably savors of a tyranny to which any born Presbyterian will find it hard to submit. On the other hand, if an Assembly attempts to give reasons for its veto, all such reasons must resolve themselves into two—the lack of fitness to teach, and the lack of orthodoxy. How difficult it is for an Assembly to adduce either of these reasons in support of its decision without precipitating serious trouble, will be evident on very slight reflection.

Suppose the reason to be the *lack of fitness to teach*, whatever may be the special nature of that lack. At once a series of questions spring up, such as the following: What constitutes fitness to teach in a theological seminary? What are the special requisites to success in this or that particular

department of the theological study? Is the Assembly as well qualified as the particular board of trust to ascertain whether the person appointed possesses such fitness, and in what degree? Is it right for a board, after it has chosen a teacher as the result of the most minute investigation it can make, to let its deliberate judgment be set aside by the veto of a body every way less prepared to decide the matter wisely? Would it be just to the man himself, if, after he and the board had settled the matter, and a call had been presented and accepted, the Assembly should step in, and with only such knowledge as a body so constituted would possess, should hold him up before the whole Church and before the world as a person incompetent to teach, and unfit for the place to which he had been chosen?

So serious are such questions that it is doubtful whether any General Assembly could be induced to take such a step on this ground. The case must be an exceptional one indeed; and the veto of the Assembly would become not merely a remarkable and destructive condemnation of the man, but also a verdict of gross incompetency against the board who had appointed him. And the case would be more exceptional still if the chosen instructor had already been before the Church for many years in some similar capacity, perchance in the same institution, and the board that chose him had acted on the basis of an experimental acquaintance with his abilities as a teacher.

But the second ground, *the lack of orthodoxy*, is a hundredfold more perplexing. Suppose an Assembly should openly say, in any given case, We put our veto on this appointment, because in our judgment the chosen instructor is not orthodox, or is heretical, according to our standards. Suppose it should vary the statement, and say in a more guarded form, We do not condemn this man as a minister, but we do pronounce his teachings doubtful and dangerous in quality, and even heretical, and on this ground declare him unfit as a teacher. The Assembly of 1836 has established a precedent

against any declaration of the latter sort, before which it would be very difficult to set up valid opposition. The distinction between the minister and professor, between the man and his teachings, vanishes the moment it is touched. It is simply impossible to pronounce the teaching heretical without condemning the man also; and it is simply impossible to condemn the teacher without pronouncing judgment on the minister also. But this is clearly inadmissible under our Form of Government. The obvious principle in the case, as the precedent of 1836 affirms, is that the Assembly cannot do by indirection what it cannot do directly and under constitutional warrant, and for such a declaration and distinction as this there can be no constitutional warrant whatsoever.

The declaration of the first sort is still more obviously inadmissible so long as the Presbytery to which such a teacher is amenable, regards and treats him as orthodox. At this point the Assembly is powerless. The experience of the Southern Church in the case of Prof. Woodrow ought to be a sufficient guide and warning here. It is not needful that the person implicated be already undergoing judicial examination before the only body on earth competent of pronouncing upon him ecclesiastically. The simple fact that he stands unimpeached before that body, is enough to forbid the Assembly from assuming any judicial prerogatives in his case. No difference of this sort can be recognized in our Form of Government, between one minister and another, between a teacher in a seminary and a pastor in his pulpit, and any attempt to set up such a distinction can only end in trouble. In a word, the Assembly is absolutely precluded by our constitution from pronouncing an opinion by mere resolution upon the good standing of even the humblest minister in our Church.

The compact of 1870 thus betrays its weakness in whatever aspect it may be regarded. To say the best that can be said, the only two grounds on which the Assembly can

possibly act under it are doubtful and dangerous grounds. It loads the Church with a responsibility which is pleasant enough so long as there is no occasion to wield it, but which is as certain as fate to bring in trouble wherever there is fair room for doubt as to either the capacity or the orthodoxy of any candidate for professional service. The experience of the current year will inevitably be repeated in every like case as long as the compact lasts. Differences of interpretation as to its intent and scope will always arise, as they have unhappily sprung up in this instance. Diversities of judgment and more or less dissatisfaction with the result will always make their appearance, and whatever may be the effect upon the seminary involved, the Church is sure to suffer much more than it gains.

Add to this calm statement that "the compact of 1870" was no legal compact at all, but simply a friendly agreement, and Dr. Morris' argument becomes irresistible.

Let us now turn to Auburn. This seminary, unlike Lane and Union, was already under ecclesiastical control, namely, that of four adjacent synods. Here also there was doubt and scruple respecting the legal aspect of the agreement of 1870. It was not until 1873 that Auburn consented to enter into the arrangement. The following was its official action in the case:

The committee to whom has been referred the question as to whether the proposal of the General Assembly to submit the election of professors in the seminary to the control of that body can be complied with without a change of the charter of this institution, would respectfully report, that they have carefully examined said charter, and sought legal counsel on the subject. They find that the board of commissioners is invested with the sole and ultimate authority to appoint its professors, and *they cannot legally delegate this power to any other body.* They are, however, convinced of the

fact that they may in their primary action make a conditional appointment, subject to the approval of the General Assembly, and that the right of such approval may be accorded to and recognized from that body without necessarily interfering with their ultimate authority. The committee regard the seminary as standing in an organic relation to the General Assembly *through its commissioners, who are themselves ecclesiastically amenable to the action of that body,* and that, therefore, there is a generic propriety in submitting their appointments conditionally to its advisory action.

They further find that it comes within the sphere of power accorded to the board by the charter that they make whatever by-laws and regulations they may regard as essential for the prosperity of the seminary; and, therefore, deeming it desirable that this institution be classed on an equal basis with others of a like character as under the patronage and supervision of the General Assembly, the committee would hereby present and commend for adoption by the board the following by-law, viz.: "That hereafter the appointments of professors in this seminary be primarily made conditional upon the approval of the General Assembly, and that such appointments be complete and authoritative only upon securing such approval."—(Minutes of the Board of Commissioners of Auburn Seminary, meeting May 8, 1873.)

(2). But while at Lane, and, later, at Auburn also, the agreement of 1870 between Union Seminary and the General Assembly excited at the time serious doubt, and was adopted only in a modified form upon the advice of able legal counsel, the agreement yet met with general acquiescence as a "suitable arrangement." For twenty years it remained, as we have seen, quiescent and undisputed. Nobody challenged either its legality or its expediency, and this for the simple reason that the power with which it clothed the Assembly was never used. For several months before the meeting of the Assembly of 1891, it is true, the

veto power was widely discussed in the religious papers, but chiefly as to its direct bearing upon the case of Dr. Briggs, not as to its legality or its wisdom. Only after the action of the General Assembly were men's eyes opened to discern its real character. That action, as is apt to be the case with all unfair and arbitrary exercise of power, aroused thoughtful public opinion in a high degree, and precipitated, so to say, conclusions and a judgment touching the whole matter which years of ordinary discussion could not have reached.

The public reason and conscience, under certain conditions, give their verdict very quickly, and in a way not to be gainsaid. I believe it will prove to have been so in the present instance. No arguments are likely to shut again the eyes—and their name is legion—which were opened so wide by the action at Detroit. Not alone Union Seminary and its oldest and best friends, but thousands of the best and most discerning friends of Christian scholarship and reasonable liberty of theological inquiry and teaching throughout the country, felt that a hard blow had been struck at a great interest common and equally dear to them all. It would be easy to illustrate the intensity and strength of this feeling by numberless testimonies, given in private letters and coming from all parts of the Union. I have myself read scores of such letters, some of them written by men noted for their fine culture, their piety, their zeal for the truth as it is in Jesus, and their unusual weight of character. Of the public testimonies and protests called forth by the action at Detroit, time would fail me to speak at length. Two or three only must suffice; and I give them just as they appeared, without, of course, holding myself responsible for all they contain. The first is from the pen of the Rev. C. H. Haydn, D.D., LL.D., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Cleveland, Ohio, a man

whose name stands for whole-souled devotion to the kingdom of Christ. Dr. Haydn was a member of the Assembly at Detroit, and chairman of its Standing Committee on Foreign Missions. Of the veto of Dr. Briggs he said, addressing his own people:

Had the Union Seminary acquiesced in this veto, *I question whether a twelvemonth would have gone by before men in at least three other seminaries would have been called to account in one way or another, and liberty within the lines of Holy Scripture would have had a set-back from which it would not have recovered in a quarter of a century.* Princeton would have triumphed all along the line, and nothing could well be worse than to have Princeton dominate the thinking of the Presbyterian Church. Already, to my view, it begins to dawn that Princeton's ecclesiastical lawyer has overreached himself, and unwittingly aided the very cause that he thought to put under the ban of the Church.

My next extract is from a letter of the Rev. Robert W. Patterson, D. D., of Chicago, now past his seven and seventieth year. Dr. Patterson is a venerated patriarch, as he was for more than a generation the New School leader, of the Presbyterian Church in the great Northwest. He was moderator of the General Assembly in 1859, and was also a member of the New School branch of the Joint Committee on Reunion. If there be another man in the whole Interior who stands higher in the estimate of his ministerial brethren, or whose judgment in matters relating to the order and prosperity of the Presbyterian Church, is entitled to greater weight, I do not know his name. Here is what Dr. Patterson says:

I am distressed about our seminaries. The plan of allowing the General Assembly a veto on appointments is, I am persuaded, unwise. I question with many as to the fitness of Dr. Briggs for the place to which he was elected by the

Union directors, but I think it very unsafe for the Assembly to veto the action of such a board, especially when a trial of the professor-elect is pending. It must necessarily be in a great measure a prejudgment of the judicial case. And in most instances of veto, a judicial case will be likely to follow or to be actually pending.

Besides, it is not clear that in ordinary cases the Assembly is as competent a judge as a well-selected board. Moreover, if the Assembly were the more competent body, it could not fail to awaken dangerous antagonism for it to exercise such authority. It is not like a veto of a *nomination;* it is a veto of an *appointment,* so far as the board can make one, and it is, therefore, an injurious judgment against the professor-elect and also against the board electing.

And, still further, it is likely to create a wide sympathy for the injured parties, and give currency to the very errors which it was designed to prevent. This is evidently so in the present case, in which grossly partisan action has been taken. The proper check upon unwise appointments is the *discipline* of the Church, if serious errors are taught by the appointee. The New School Church never lodged any veto power in the Assembly. Such power ought not now to be continued ; it is virtually the trial of a man without process and without forms of law. Not one quotation from Dr. Briggs was made in the debate at Detroit, so far as I heard, and no reasons were given in the final judgment. *This was monstrous.*

Along with this emphatic expression of opinion I will quote some passages in the same strain from a private letter of Dr. Patterson:

I have not liked Dr. Briggs' utterances, especially the tone of them. But I regard the action of Princeton in the matter as a startling illustration of the grievous injustice that will always be liable to be done to a professor-elect and to a seminary, so long as the power of v eto remains with the A

sembly. It is a sort of lynch-law condemnation on technicality, without trial and with no reasons responsibly alleged, but with utterly untrue reasons implied or assumed. I see no escape from a like injustice in any case where a veto can be plausibly demanded. First, get up a clamor, and then have a one-sided committee appointed to report that something must be done at once, or the Assembly will be held as approving, and give no reasons, leaving every man to sustain the report for his own reasons, or on the ground of his own prepossessions. This is a receipt for crushing out any and every appointee that happens to incur popular displeasure on a question about which the Church is sensitive. How easy to apply the guillotine in every such case! and if the candidate for decapitation cannot be easily answered on the main points, the motive is greater to dispatch him by *votes*. I have written simply because I feel like it. I do not agree with Dr. Briggs on some important questions, but I would not, if I could, overrule the directors in regard to any such question, and no more would I concede this right to the Assembly. We cannot afford to have our able men brushed aside by popular clamor, even if on some points they may have gone too far. If they become heretics, let their heresy be *judicially proved*. But let not the Assembly prejudge indirectly its future disciplinary action. The day has passed for *settling* critical questions by votes of councils or assemblies. But it is possible to distress and distract a whole denomination for a generation by attempting this impossibility. The numbers will increase of those who will say with Dr. Van Dyke: "If we cannot have orthodoxy and liberty both, let us have liberty."

I will give one more testimony and protest. It is from a letter of the Rev. S. M. Hamilton, D.D., addressed to Dr. Field, editor of *The Evangelist*, and dated Louisville, Ky., June 5, 1891. Dr. Hamilton for more than half a generation was pastor of the old Scotch Church in Fourteenth

St., New York, where he won the confidence, respect, and love of his ministerial brethren and of all the churches by his charming personal qualities, by his fine scholarship, and by his solid Christian character and services:

The outside public have received a very definite impression that our highest ecclesiastical court has acted unfairly and unjustly towards one of our foremost Biblical scholars. The issue will not increase the respect of the world for the Presbyterian Church. She has suffered immensely more than Dr. Briggs. Thoughtful men are saying—I have heard them—that our Church will not allow her scholars to make a thorough study of the Bible by the modern scientific methods unless they first bind themselves to come to no conclusions, save such as are acceptable to a certain theological school in the Church. Such an impression—and it exists and is spreading—is calamitous, not to the Church only, but to religion itself. Add to this the feeling which is abroad, that the Assembly has condemned an eminent professor without assigning any reasons therefor, and on the report of a committee not a member of which was a friend of the professor or of Union Seminary, and the injury to the reputation of our Church cannot be calculated.

I have been on terms of intimate friendship with Dr. Briggs for years. I have lived with him, I have walked the mountains with him, I have talked with him for hours together, and I say deliberately that he has done more to make the Bible a real living book to me, the true Word of God, than all other ministers and teachers I have known in the whole course of my life. His friendship is one of the things for which I shall always have reason to be thankful. In my judgment Dr. Briggs is the most *inspiring* teacher of the Bible our Church possesses. No vote of any Assembly can impair his reputation among the Biblical scholars of Christendom.

(3). The action at Detroit was an eye-opener with regard to the unwisdom of trying to regulate theological opinion and

teaching by popular vote. The instant the attempt is actually made, its futility is demonstrated. I doubt if the vote at Detroit really moved theological opinion a hair's breadth. Nor will it be at all more effective in the matter of theological instruction. Unless further enlightened respecting divine truth by deeper study and fresh inspirations of the Eternal Spirit, Princeton, and Union, and Lane, and all the rest, will continue to teach in 1892 what they taught in 1890. As aforetime, they will take counsel of Holy Scripture and of the venerable standards of the Presbyterian Church, as also of the old creeds of Christendom. They will still read diligently the writings of the great masters of divinity, whether of ancient, or medieval, or later ages; they will try to discern the signs of the times; and they will exercise themselves in working out more fully their own honest thought. But they will take very little note of what was said, or voted, on the subject at Detroit. When in 1845, at Cincinnati, the Old School General Assembly, led by some of the strongest men in that branch of the Presbyterian Church, decided by a vote of 173 to 8—a majority not of 7 to 1, as at Detroit, but of more than 20 to 1—that what was called "Romish Baptism" is spurious and unchristian, Dr. Charles Hodge of Princeton, in spite of the brilliant Dr. Thornwell, and of Dr. L. N. Rice, and of Dr. Junkin, and of nearly the whole Assembly, not only went right on teaching his students the old Protestant view, but he attacked the decision of the Assembly as wrong in fact and false in doctrine, demonstrating, with most cogent reasoning, that, notwithstanding her errors, the Church of Rome is still a branch of the Christian Church, and that baptism duly administered by her, is Christian baptism. Dr. Hodge knew very well that if such questions were to be decided by a majority vote in a popular assembly, instead of being decided according to the truth of history and the voice of Scripture, the occupation of the theological professor is well-nigh clean

gone forever. This veto power is like one of those terrible pieces of new ordnance of which we have read lately so much. It is not only a most formidable instrument for destroying an enemy, but of self-destruction as well, unless handled with consummate skill. Setting five hundred men, mostly untrained for the task, to firing it off all together, even under the direction of an ecclesiastical expert, is extremely dangerous and against all the lessons of even worldly prudence.

Do I mean, then, that it is no function of the Presbyterian Church to bear faithful witness against prevalent errors in doctrine and practice, or, if necessary, in the way of godly discipline, to put upon them the stamp of her censure and condemnation? No, that is not my meaning. It seems to me one of the highest functions of a church of Jesus Christ to bear constant, earnest witness for Him and His truth, and to put the mark of her strong disapproval upon all errors contrary thereto. This is one great end for which the Church exists in the world. When she ceases to be a witness-bearer and the enemy alike of false doctrine and evil practice, her glory is departed. The question is: How shall she best fulfil this duty? And here there is need of the wisest discrimination, of large experience, of the amplest knowledge, of much self-restraint, and of Christian justice, candor, and magnanimity in their finest expression.

It is far from my meaning, I repeat, that the Presbyterian Church, or any other church of Christ, is not bound to hold fast to the faith once delivered to the saints; to stand up for soundness both of doctrine and morals; to bear witness against error; and to be very jealous for the honor of God and His inspired oracles. No church can here exceed the measure of her duty. Nor do I in the least question that the Presbyterian Church, in the performance of this solemn duty, may often speak and act most effectually

through the voice and votes of the representative assembly. The popular voice and vote, thus expressed, is a ruling principle in our American system of republican government; and it is a ruling principle no less in American Presbyterianism—the source in large measure of its wonderful elasticity, freedom, and working power. Nobody shall surpass me in admiring it and its splendid achievements.

But alike in the civil sphere and in that of religion there are some things, which in their very nature, belong to the domain and jurisdiction, not of the many, but rather of the select few. There are questions in the civil order which the judges of the land, not the legislators, alone are authorized and competent to decide. And so in the religious sphere there are matters which only learned divines and scholars—specially trained, chosen, and set apart for the purpose—are qualified to pass judgment upon. Such, for example, are many of the questions raised by what is called the higher or literary criticism of the Bible. No popular vote, however honest and intelligent, can decide them; nor are ordinary scholars, however learned, competent to decide them. They must be decided, if at all, by the ablest sort of trained minds, just as there are questions in law, in finance, in every department of science, which only experts of the highest class are qualified to settle for us.

(*i*). *A word in conclusion.*

I have thus endeavored to consider the action at Detroit in the case of Dr. Briggs in its bearing upon Union Seminary and upon the Presbyterian Church. It has been my aim to tell the truth, so far as possible, and nothing but the truth. And it has been my aim, also, to do this in a frank and Christian way. Certainly, it would have been much easier to write in a freer style. If my language savors now

and then of severity, or even ridicule, it is because the truth seems to me to demand such language. No reasonable man could have supposed that the friends of Union Seminary were going to keep silent, or that when they did speak they would speak with bated breath. If trained in no special awe of a General Assembly, they do stand in awe of God and His truth, of Christian justice, and of that glorious liberty wherewith their divine Master has made them free. What then, in view of the whole situation, ought to be done? It is not for me to answer this question further than to say, that, in my opinion, it is high time for the alumni and friends of Union Seminary to come to a good understanding among themselves, to act in concert, and to adopt such measures as shall give the whole world assurance of their determination to join hands with the Board of directors and Faculty of Union Seminary in maintaining the character, honor, and chartered rights of the Institution.

Whatever prejudice or suspicion against Union Seminary prevails in the Presbyterian Church is, as I believe, largely the effect of ignorance or misapprehension. Union Seminary stands firm on her original foundations as an institution of Christian theology in the service of the Presbyterian Church and of the Church Universal. Taking the inspired Word of God as her rule of faith and practice, she is striving in all things for the faith and furtherance of the Gospel; first in our own land, and then over all the earth. These are her ambitions, and she has no other. With every other school of divinity, of whatever name, she desires to keep step to the music of the whole church militant in fighting the battles of truth and righteousness, here and everywhere. Especially does she desire to march and fight in fellowship with all other seminaries of the Presbyterian Church. She is ready to say to them, in the words of Henry B. Smith,

—words penned before the reunion, but still fresh and true as ever:

Let us advance with open brow to meet the greater questions which are fast advancing to meet us. Let us not make so much account of Old School and New School; and even if we believe the substance of the Old is better, let us not deny that the earnestness, the philosophic spirit, the advancing movement, the wider aims of the New, are of inestimable good. Who can so afford to be patient as the orthodox, who know that the right faith will in the end surely triumph. Let us eschew the arts of intrigue, of defamation, and innuendo. These are easily learned. They are the offspring of fear or of hate. They show a timorous or a dogmatic spirit. Let us not deny until we understand, or insult feelings before we know their reason, for it is easier to be extreme than to be candid, to denounce than to examine. In the spirit of love and wisdom let us maintain cogency of argument, energy of faith, and urgency of zeal.

APPENDIX.

I.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EDWARD ROBINSON CHAIR OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY.

At the regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York, held November 11, 1890, the following preamble and resolution were adopted by a unanimous vote :

WHEREAS, The Honorable Charles Butler, LL.D., President of the Board of Directors of this Seminary, has made provision for a permanent fund for the purpose of establishing and endowing a chair in this Seminary, to be called the Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology :

NOW THEREFORE, *Resolved*, That a new professorship shall be and is hereby created, which shall be called the "Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology"; that the income of the endowment of one hundred thousand dollars given to this Seminary by the said Charles Butler in the manner mentioned in his bond, dated April 25, 1890, shall be applied solely to the support of said chair, according to the provisions of said bond.

The President of the Faculty suggested that the Board, in courtesy, should ask Dr. Butler to express to us freely his wishes with reference to the action just taken.

Thereupon President Butler addressed the Board of Directors as follows :

"The formal establishment by the Board of 'The Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology' fulfils the object desired in the provision which I have made for its endowment. I beg to express my satisfaction and gratitude for this action. It is in accord with the views of the distinguished Christian

scholar in whose memory the chair is founded. In a letter to the Board, dated January 20, 1837, accepting the Professorship of Sacred Literature, he said: 'The Constitution properly requires every Professor to declare that he believes the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. This is placing the Bible in its true position as the only foundation of Christian theology. It follows as a necessary consequence that the study of the Bible, as taught in the department of Biblical Literature, must be the foundation of all right theological education.' This new Chair of Biblical Theology seems to me to realize the sentiment embodied in this quotation, in a form which, if he were now present with us, would receive his benediction. It embalms his memory indissolubly with the life of this Seminary, and will ever be an inspiration to its students in their 'search of the Scriptures.'

"In regard to the incumbent of this Chair, I avail of the courtesy of the Board to express my wish that it may be one who sat as a pupil at the feet of that eminent teacher, and I regard it as a felicity to the Seminary that there is one here who has been trained within its walls, and who, by his ripe scholarship and purity of character in Christian faith and practice, has won the confidence and affection of his associate Professors, of this Board of Directors, and of the students who have come under his teaching during these years of faithful and devoted service.

"From what I have said, you will anticipate that my wishes will be fully gratified in the appointment of the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., as eminently qualified to fill this Chair. In this expression of preference, it gives me the greatest pleasure to say that I do but voice the views and wishes of our late revered President of the Faculty, Roswell D. Hitchcock. Dr. Briggs was his choice for this Chair.

"I cannot doubt that the highest interests of this Seminary, and, what is more, those of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth, will be promoted by this realization of the plans of

these two Christian scholars, both as regards the foundation of the Chair and the selection of the suggested incumbent."

THE APPOINTMENT OF THE INCUMBENT.

At the conclusion of President Butler's address, Henry Day, Esq., offered the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted :

Resolved, That Professor Charles A. Briggs, D.D., be transferred from the Davenport Professorship of Hebrew and the Cognate Languages to the Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology.

Professor Briggs, having been duly advised of the action above recorded, addressed a communication to the Board, under date of January 7, 1891, accepting the new Chair to which he had been transferred. It is as follows :

120 West 93d St., New York,
January 7, 1891.

Gentlemen of the Board of Directors of the Union Theological Seminary, New York:

I thank you for the mark of confidence expressed in your choice of me to fill the Edward Robinson Professorship of Biblical Theology. There is no Chair that so well suits my tastes and my studies for the past twenty-five years. Under the advice of the Faculty, I have been building up the department of Biblical Theology for some years past. But I had reached the limit of new work. I could not advance further until relieved of the Hebrew work. In accepting the new Chair, I propose to push the work of the department rapidly forward, and to cover the whole ground of the Chair at as early a date as possible. I give over the work of the Hebrew Chair to my pupil, colleague, and friend, Dr. Brown, with confidence, that building on the foundations I have laid, he will make marked improvement upon my work.

Biblical Theology is, at the present time, the vantage ground for the solution of those important problems in religion, doc-

trine, and morals that are compelling the attention of the men of our times. The Bible is the Word of God, and its authority is divine authority that determines the faith and life of men. Biblical scholars have been long held in bondage to ecclesiasticism and dogmatism. But modern Biblical criticism has won the battle of freedom. The accumulations of long periods of traditional speculation and dogmatism have been in large measure removed, and the Bible itself stands before the men of our time in a commanding position, such as it never has enjoyed before. On all sides it is asked, not what do the creeds teach, what do the theologians say, what is the authority of the Church, but what does the Bible itself teach us? It is the office of Biblical Theology to answer this question. It is the culmination of the work of Exegesis. It rises on a complete induction through all the departments of Biblical study to a comprehensive grasp of the Bible as a whole, in the unity and variety of the sum of its teaching. It draws the line with the teaching of the Bible. It fences off from the Scriptures all the speculations, all the dogmatic elaborations, all the doctrinal adaptations that have been made in the history of doctrine in the Church. It does not deny their propriety and importance, but it insists upon the three-fold distinction as necessary to truth and theological honesty, that the theology of the Bible is one thing, the only infallible authority; the theology of the creeds is another thing, having simply ecclesiastical authority; and the theology of the theologians, or Dogmatic Theology, is a third thing, which has no more authority than any other system of human construction. It is well known that until quite recent times, and even at present in some quarters, the creeds have lorded it over the Scriptures, and the dogmaticians have lorded it over the creeds, so that in its last analysis the authority in the Church has been, too often, the authority of certain theologians. Now, Biblical Theology aims to limit itself strictly to the theology of the Bible itself. Biblical theologians are fallible men, and doubtless it is true, that

they err in their interpretation of the Scriptures, as have others ; but it is the aim of the discipline to give the theology of the Bible pure and simple ; and the inductive and historical methods that determine the working of the department are certainly favorable to an objective presentation of the subject, and are unfavorable to the intrusion of subjective fancies and circumstantial considerations. It will be my aim, so long as I remain in the Chair, to accomplish this ideal as far as possible. Without fear or favor I shall teach the truth of God's Word as I find it. The theology of the Bible is much simpler, richer, and grander than any of the creeds or dogmatic systems. These have been built upon select portions of the Bible, and there is a capriciousness of selection in them all. But Biblical Theology makes no selection of texts—it uses the entire Bible in all its passages, and in every single passage, giving each its place and importance in the unfolding of divine revelation. To Biblical Theology the Bible is a mine of untold wealth ; treasures, new and old, are in its storehouses ; all its avenues lead, in one way or another, to the presence of the living God and the divine Saviour.

The work of Biblical Theology is conducted on such a comprehensive study of the Bible, that while the Professor builds upon a thorough study of the original texts, his class must use their English Bibles. A thorough study of the English Bible is necessarily included in the course. If the plan of the work is carried out, the student will accompany his Professor through the entire English Bible during his Seminary course, and will be taught to expound a large number of the most important passages in the light of all the passages leading up to them.

In conclusion, allow me to express my gratitude to the venerable President of the Board of Directors for the interest he has ever taken in my work, for the honor he has shown me in nominating me for the Chair he so generously founded, and for attaching to the Chair, with such modesty and consideration, the name of Edward Robinson, my honored teacher,

the greatest name on the roll of Biblical scholars of America, and the most widely known and honored of her professors. I shall regard it as my high calling and privilege to build on his foundations, and to advance the work that he carried on as far as it can be advanced in the circumstances of our time. The names of Edward Robinson and Charles Butler will be entwined into a bond of double strength to sustain me in the delicate and difficult work that I now undertake to do.

Faithfully,

C. A. Briggs.

II.

THE INAUGURATION.

Tuesday Evening, Jan. 20, 1891.

President Charles Butler, LL.D. presided. After devotional exercises, at the request of Mr. Butler, the President of the Faculty made a brief preliminary statement, as follows:

"As has been announced, last May the President of the Board of Directors of the Union Theological Seminary, Charles Butler, LL.D., provided for the endowment of a new Chair in the sum of $100,000.

"On the basis of this munificent gift, at the recent meeting of the Board, the new Professorship was formally established, to be known, in accordance with the request of President Butler, as *The Edward Robinson Professorship of Biblical Theology.* This was designed by Mr. Butler to be a memorial of his long-time friend, the late Edward Robinson, D.D., LL.D., the first Professor of Sacred Literature in this institution, who honored that Chair and this Seminary by his long and distinguished service from 1837 to 1863.

"The President of the Board suggested that it would be in accord with his own wishes and with those of his friend, the late President Roswell D. Hitchcock, D.D., LL.D., if the Board should transfer the Rev. Professor Charles A. Briggs,

D.D., to the new Chair just established. By a unanimous vote the Board at once adopted the suggestion of their President, and transferred Professor Briggs from the '*Davenport Chair of Hebrew and the Cognate Languages*' to the '*Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology.*' Dr. Briggs, having signified his acceptance of this transfer, his inauguration will now take place."

President Butler addressed Professor Briggs as follows :

"On behalf of the Board of Directors, and in accordance with the Constitution of the 'Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York,' I call upon you to '*make and subscribe*' the '*declaration*' required of each member of the Faculty of this institution."

Thereupon Professor Briggs made the 'declaration' as follows :

"*I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and I do now, in the presence of God and the Directors of this Seminary, solemnly and sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. I do also, in like manner, approve of the Presbyterian Form of Government; and I do solemnly promise that I will not teach or inculcate anything which shall appear to me to be subversive of the said system of doctrines, or of the principles of said Form of Government, so long as I shall continue to be a Professor in the Seminary.*"

Thereupon President Butler said :

"In the name of the Board of Directors, I declare that Professor Charles A. Briggs, D.D., is inaugurated as the Incumbent of the *Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology.*

"On behalf of the Board of Directors, the Charge to Professor Briggs will now be delivered by the member of the Board duly appointed for this service,—the Rev. David R. Frazer, D.D., the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Newark, N. J."

THE CHARGE.

My dear Brother Briggs :

Before attempting to discharge the duty which, by your kind consideration, has been devolved upon me, permit me to tender my heartfelt congratulations : First, upon the establishment of the Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology ; a consummation so devoutly wished for alike by yourself and by our revered Hitchcock. We all share in your joy, and recognize the new departure as a long and a right step in advance in the history of our Institution.

In the orderings of God's providence every age has its own peculiar problem to solve, the solution being wrought out from the standpoint of its own pressing needs. It is a marked characteristic of our day that the Bible is now studied as never before in the world's history, and the establishment of this new department is in the line of this development, and is answerable to this modern demand. For, if I understand aright the function of Biblical Theology, it does not conduct a simple, grammatical exercise ; it does not discuss the various textual readings ; it does not study the opinions of the Fathers or the deliverances of the Church ; it does not formulate a body of systematic divinity grouped about some chosen central principle. These are important and legitimate topics of study, hence are properly cared for in our curriculum. They will doubtless be very helpful as external aids in the prosecution of the work of this Chair, but the peculiar province of Biblical Theology is to study the Word ; to determine what God intends to say in His Word, and then to formulate these hallowed teachings.

Such being its province, I need not pause to show that Biblical Theology is the normal response to that modern critical spirit which refuses to accept anything upon the basis of authority, and insists upon tracing everything back to its genetic principle and its efficient cause. Neither need I tarry to discriminate sharply and accurately between the

functions of Biblical and Systematic Theology. If you, my dear brother, have any especial interest in or desire for information on this general subject, I would respectfully refer you to a work on "Biblical Study," which is published by the Scribners, and was written by one who has served long and well in, and has just been transferred from, "the Davenport Professorship of Hebrew and the Cognate Languages" in this Institution; and, if you are not acquainted with the work, I can assure you that the time spent in its perusal will not be wasted, for you will find therein an admirable and exhaustive discussion of the subject.

But I want to congratulate you, secondly, upon the fact that *you* are to be the incumbent of the new Chair, a position for which you are pre-eminently qualified by reason of the peculiar character of your past studies. I am very well aware that you would much prefer to have me discuss the general topic of Biblical Theology, and to dwell upon the claims it has to a place in our curriculum, rather than to hint the name of, or make any reference to the Professor who is to occupy the new Chair. But if anything of a personal character should be said, please remember, my brother, you have no one to blame save yourself, since, passing by abler men, you have kindly insisted that your old friend and classmate should deliver the Charge, as you enter upon the awful responsibilities of your new position. And as the class spirit asserts itself, I will say, despite your unspoken protest, that the class of '64 is proud of its representative; that it rejoices in your well-deserved success, and that it appropriates to itself a peculiar glory by virtue of the events of this hour. Little did we dream, when we sat at the feet of that honored man whose name gives dignity to your new Chair, as also at the feet of those other scholarly and godly men, Henry B. Smith, Thomas H. Skinner, Roswell D. Hitchcock, and Henry H. Hadley, men whose presence was a benediction, whose instruction was an inspiration, whose memories are revered and hallowed, that there was among us, going in and out

just as we went in and out, one who was destined to sit in Gamaliel's seat and to honor the exalted position by his scholarly attainments. Yet such was the fact, and although you wish I would not say it, still, as your classmate and on behalf of the class thus signally honored, I tender you our warmest and heartiest congratulations.

And I propose saying still further, since I betray no confidence by the declaration, that it would have greatly rejoiced your heart and would have wonderfully inspirited you for your work could you have heard the cordial, tender, and appreciative words with which our venerable and venerated President of the Board of Directors (who is also the kind and generous patron through whose munificence the new Chair has been endowed, "Serus in coelum redeas"), placed your name, the only name placed in nomination for the position.

And I am sure you would have been more than pleased could you have witnessed the unanimity with which the Directors ratified the nomination and transferred you from the Davenport Chair of Hebrew to the Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology. I congratulate you that the honored and revered Founder of the department wanted *you* in the department which he founded, and also upon the fact that you enter upon your new work in the enjoyment of the fullest confidence, respect, and love of the Directors of this Seminary.

But I may not forget that this is your hour. Inasmuch as I cannot hope to impart any instruction respecting the peculiar and practical duties of your new position, I would be content to let these congratulatory words take the place of the more formal charge. In order, however, to meet the requirements of my appointment, and to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance, I charge you:

First. To have clear, well-settled, and accurately defined views of the nature, the scope, and the design of the Holy Scriptures.

The Bible is to be your text-book, and the Bible claims to be the book of God. If this high claim cannot be maintained; if the Bible be not the book of God, as verily as Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then is it unworthy of our confidence. That Word which was in the beginning with God and was God, and which in the fulness of time began to be flesh, was, as the Incarnate Word, the God-man, very God and very Man. We do not understand this "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." We do not attempt to explain it, but we accept it, we believe it, we rest our hopes of life, here and hereafter, upon it. And upon this same basis we can accept the Word written. It also is an incarnation. Great is the mystery of Revelation, God manifesting His thought in the forms of human speech. Since holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, the Divine and human elements are co-ordinated in the Word written as well as in the Word Incarnated. We must recognize the Divine and human factors in the Scriptures, and assign a legitimate place to each and to both, but I need not charge you, my dear brother, to bear in ceaseless remembrance the fact, that just in the proportion that the Divine element is eliminated or is abnormally subordinated to the human, is the authority of the Bible circumscribed and the power of the Bible abridged. You will never forget that you have God's Word for your text-book, and you will never fail to teach it as the very Word of God.

The *scope* of Biblical instruction is clearly set forth on the sacred page. Great mischief is often wrought by the notion that the Bible aims to cover the whole sphere of human knowledge, and that its authority is lessened by the concession that there are some things which can be comprehended without its aid. We surely do not need the Bible to teach us that two and two make four, or that the whole is greater than any of its parts. The Holy Word has a distinct mission and a definite aim. It does not come to us as a teacher of physics or of metaphysics, but as a revelation: as a revela-

tion of God : as a revelation of God to man : as a revelation of God to man concerning the highest and the dearest moral interests of man, alike for time and for eternity. It comes to man, not primarily to reason, but to reveal, and to reveal those high themes, which, by necessity of being, transcend the ordinary processes of human thought. While pervaded with an air of simplicity and honesty and truthfulness, it comes not primarily to persuade, but to command, and to command, not in view of the deductions of human reason, or in the light of conclusions reached by the processes of a speculative philosophy, but upon that simple, yet sublime, basis, "Thus saith the Lord God."

The *design* of Revelation is summed up essentially in the Johannean statement, "these things are *written* that ye might *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have *life* through His name." As all roads led to Rome, so all Scripture leads to Christ. The poetry, the prophecy, the precepts, the biography, the history of the Bible, find their true centrality in Him who was at once dust and Divinity, the Workman of Nazareth, the Prophet of Galilee, 'The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' The final end and ultimate design of the Holy Scriptures are "to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus"; hence it is your business, my dear brother, from the Word written to educe the Word Incarnate, and I beg you to so present Jesus Christ to all who come to you for instruction, that they may go from your class-room to their great life-work, not only impressed with an abiding sense of the matchless beauty and the mighty power of that Divine Saviour concerning whom the Scriptures so abundantly testify, but also, and as the normal outcome of your teachings, with a fixed determination "to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

But Paul forewarns "of things hard to be understood," of problems which must perplex the most acute mind and defy the grasp of the most profound intellect. Furthermore, in

the interpretation of the Word, conflicting views respecting the exact significance of the revelation will arise. Who shall decide when learned doctors disagree? To whom shall the ultimate appeal be taken? Manifestly to the Spirit of the Living God by whom the declaration was prompted, and to whom the meaning is clear; hence, I charge you,

Secondly, Seek the aid of the Holy Ghost in your arduous and responsible work.

I attempt no solution of the mooted question as to whether our Lord's promise that the Holy Ghost should lead believers in "the way of all truth," was restricted to the Apostolic College, and was literally fulfilled in the written revelation, or whether it pertains to believers in all time.

But the Scriptures most clearly require that all believers should "live in the Spirit," "walk in the Spirit," "be filled with the Spirit." Christian consciousness bears witness that the abiding presence of the Spirit begets deep and vital spirituality, and Christian experience abundantly confirms the assertion that vital spirituality ensures a large insight of that truth which must be spiritually discerned. A willingness to do God's will must precede the knowledge of the doctrine, and this willingness of mind and heart must be begotten by the Holy Ghost. Put peculiar honor upon the Divine Spirit and He will put peculiar honor upon you and your work. He will open your eyes to behold the wondrous things in God's law; He will give you the witness of His presence in your own soul, and will enable you, in all meekness and humility, yet with the highest Christian positiveness, to say: I know whom and what and why I have believed, and am persuaded that my confidence rests not upon the wisdom of man, but upon the wisdom of God.

And as you thus teach the Word of God under the guidance of the Spirit of God; as day by day you present the truth as it is in Jesus to those who are to preach a crucified Redeemer to dying men, may the Lord bless you and keep you; may He equip you for duty, help you in the dis-

charge of it, and when your great work is finished may His "Well done" be pronounced upon His "good and faithful servant."

III.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS SUSTAINING DR. BRIGGS, AS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY MAY 19, 1891.

Resolved, That this Board has listened with satisfaction to the categorical replies rendered by Dr. Briggs to the questions submitted to him, and that it trusts that the manner in which he has therein dealt with the points that are in dispute will operate to correct the misapprehensions that are so widely current, and to quiet the disturbed condition of mind in which, as a communion, we are so unhappily involved.

Resolved, The Directors of the Union Theological Seminary desire to express to Professor Briggs their high appreciation of his Christian courtesy in the consultations which he has had with the Committee of Inquiry in reference to the trying questions now under consideration.

They will stand by him heartily on the ground of this report, and affectionately commend him to the leading of a common Master, having perfect confidence in his honesty of purpose.

E. M. KINGSLEY, *Recorder.*

JOHN CROSBY BROWN, *Vice-President.*

NEW YORK, May 19, 1891.

IV.

STATEMENT OF THE FACULTY OF UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

In view of the general comment and discussion called forth by the recent Inaugural Address of Professor Charles A. Briggs, D.D., the undersigned, members of the Faculty of Union Theological Seminary, deem it their duty to make the following statement:

With the conviction that Christian courtesy, modesty, and mutual respect for difference of opinion should characterize

theological controversy, we distinctly recognize and deprecate the dogmatic and irritating character of certain of Dr. Briggs' utterances in his Inaugural and in others of his writings: while, on the other hand, we do not recognize, even in these, any warrant for persistent misrepresentations of his views, and for the style and temper in which he has in many cases been assailed.

I.—*The views propounded by Dr. Briggs in his Inaugural are not new.*

They have all been stated by him in one or another of his published works, in articles in the *Presbyterian Review*, during his ten years' editorship, and in more recent contributions to other periodicals. Moreover, for the past ten years, Dr. Briggs has been teaching Biblical Theology in the Seminary, and has been expounding to successive classes of students the statements for which he is now arraigned. The present excitement is, as we believe, due, largely, to the tone of the Inaugural Address, to certain unguarded expressions, and to an impression that the transfer of the author to the Chair of Biblical Theology would be subject to the veto of the General Assembly.

II.—*The address contains, in our judgment, nothing which can be fairly construed into heresy or departure from the Westminster Confession, to which Dr. Briggs honestly subscribed at his recent inauguration.*

(*a*). His words concerning "Bibliolatry" are not aimed at humble and devout reverence for the Word of God, but at the error, rebuked by the Apostle Paul, of revering "the letter" above "the spirit."

(*b*). Dr. Briggs declares that, conjointly with the Bible, the *Church* and the *Reason* are *sources* of authority in religion. He uses the term "reason" as embracing the conscience and the religious feeling. We object to the term "sources," since there is but one source of divine authority —God himself. We prefer to say that the Bible, the Church,

and the Reason are *media* and *vehicles* through which we recognize and receive the divine authority. This is the generally-accepted Protestant position. Every Church in Christendom admits that the Church is a medium of divine authority.

The Confession of Faith declares that "unto the catholic, visible Church, Christ hath given the *ministry*, *oracles*, and *ordinances* of God."

That the *reason*, in the broad sense in which it is explained by Dr. Briggs, is also an *organ* to and through which the divine authority is conveyed, is assumed in Scripture and in the Confession, and is the necessary postulate of a divine revelation to man. It is the only point in the natural man to which the qualities of God's character, the operations of His power, and the right-reasonableness of His claims can appeal: and it is distinctly declared and assumed by St. Paul to be the recipient of such appeals; to be the subject of the divine Spirit's illumination; and to become thus the proper instrument for discerning, comparing, and judging spiritual truth. If the reason has no such function in religion, it is superfluous to assert that "Scripture is profitable for *teaching*, for *discipline*, and for *upbuilding in righteousness*." Spiritual righteousness implies an *intelligent* and *rational* perception and reception of the law and truth of God. The *living* sacrifice which is "holy and acceptable unto God" is a "*rational* service."

But Dr. Briggs does not, with the Romanist, exalt the Church above the Bible and the Reason. He does not, with the Rationalist, place the Reason above the Bible and the Church. Neither does he, as has been often charged, *co-ordinate* the three sources. His position is the Protestant and the Presbyterian position, assumed in his subscription to the declaration of the Confession, that the Scriptures are "the only infallible rule of faith and practice," and asserted in his address in the words: "Protestant Christianity builds its faith and life on the divine authority contained in the

Scriptures." That Protestant Christianity too often depreciates the Church and the Reason is an entirely distinct statement, involving a question of fact; and the statement and its discussion in no way affect Dr. Briggs' endorsement of the Protestant doctrine of the supreme authority of Scripture.

To assert, as has been so often done, that Dr. Briggs is aiming to undermine the divine authority of Scripture, is preëminently unfair. Not only this Inaugural, but all his published writings, teem with the most positive and uncompromising expressions of love and reverence for the Bible.

(*c*). *The consistency of Dr. Briggs' position as to the supreme authority and divine quality of Holy Scripture, is in no way affected by his views of the nature of Inspiration.*

While asserting the plenary inspiration of Scripture, he denies that inspiration involves *absolute inerrancy—literal, verbal accuracy*, and *perfect correspondence of minor details.*

In this view there is nothing original or new. It is the view of Calvin, and of an overwhelming majority of Protestant divines in Europe and America. It was propounded at least eight years ago by Dr. Briggs in his "Biblical Study."

Inspiration, in the sense of literal inerrancy, is nowhere claimed for Scripture by Scripture itself.

It is contradicted by the contents of Scripture in the form in which we have it. It involves, logically, a minute, specific divine superintendence of each detail of the entire process of transmission—copying, translating, printing—and the prevention of all errors. It confronts those who maintain it not only with discrepancies of statement in the present text, but with the innumerable textual variations in the Hebrew and Greek Bibles, and the variations between the Hebrew and the Septuagint. To meet these facts with the assertion of the inerrancy of the original autographs, is to beg the whole question in dispute, to lay down a purely arbitrary, *a priori* hypothesis, and to introduce into the discussion an entirely

irrelevant factor, seeing that the errors and discrepancies remain and the original autographs cannot be recovered.

To make the inspiration of Scripture turn upon verbal inerrancy is to commit the Church to an utterly untenable position, and to place her apologists at the mercy of cavillers who are only too glad to evade broader and deeper issues and to shift the discussion to the region of mere verbal details, where they are sure to have the best of the argument.

Dr. Briggs holds and teaches the doctrine of the divine inspiration, infallibility, and authority of the Holy Scriptures in all matters of Christian faith and duty, which is all that any evangelical divine is bound to maintain on that subject. The Westminster and other Confessions of Faith clearly and strongly assert the *fact* of divine inspiration, but wisely abstain from defining the *mode* and *degrees* of divine inspiration. The former is a matter of *faith*, the latter of *human theory*, on which there must be liberty if there is to be any progress. To impose upon a Christian teacher any particular theory of inspiration not sanctioned by the Bible itself, is tyranny.

(*d*). Dr. Briggs is further charged with a departure from the Westminster Eschatology in teaching *progressive sanctification after death.*

While we are not to be understood as accepting or endorsing Dr. Briggs' conclusions on this point, it is sufficient to say that he is here in an open field, where, having expressly repudiated the doctrines of future probation, universal restoration, and the Romanist purgatory, he is certainly entitled to the largest liberty in the attempt to elucidate a subject so little understood, and on which the standards are open to differences of interpretation. The phrase "progressive sanctification after death" admits of a sound and orthodox interpretation; but Protestant Eschatology, as defined in the Confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries, is generally admitted to be defective and in need of further development within the limits of that caution and reserve imposed by the comparative silence of Scripture on that mysterious

period between death and resurrection. In the words of the late Henry B. Smith, written not long before his death: "What Reformed Theology has got to do is to Christologize predestination and decrees, regeneration and sanctification, the doctrine of the Church and *the whole of Eschatology.*"

III. After years of familiar acquaintance with Dr. Briggs and his teaching, we are moved to utter our emphatic protest against the spirit and language with which, in so many cases, he has been assailed. If, in any of his writings, Dr. Briggs, as is charged, has wantonly offended the honest convictions of good men, or has in any other way sinned against the ethical code of Christian scholarship laid down in the New Testament, it is not our business to defend him therein. He must answer for it to his own conscience and to God. But in the public discussion of matters of opinion, it is neither right nor decent that an earnest, learned, devoted scholar and faithful teacher, even though mistaken, should be attacked with virulence, contemptuous flippancy, and imputations of unworthy motive. In too many instances it seems to have been assumed that all the *sacredness* of personal conviction is upon one side; that a higher critic can have no convictions or rights which the lower critic or the uncritical censor is bound to respect; and that the fact of his differing with them justifies his opponents in laying aside in discussion the character of Christian gentlemen.

We know Dr. Briggs to be an earnest Christian, a devout student of the Bible, an indefatigable teacher and worker, and one who holds the standards of the Church with an intelligence based on an exhaustive study of their history and literature. The numerous testimonies of his students during seventeen years prove that he inspires them with a deep reverence and enthusiasm for the Bible.

In like manner we protest against the matter and temper of the assaults on Union Seminary. By its history of over half a century, by the character, standing, and services of its graduates, and by the amount and value of its contributions

to Christian Literature, this Institution should be insured against such assaults. Its value to the Presbyterian Church needs no demonstration. From the days of Edward Robinson, the pioneer of Palestine exploration and the founder of American Biblical Lexicography, Union Seminary has steadily pressed forward on the lines of advanced Biblical study. Its Professors, in subscribing to the Westminster standards, have always been understood to do so with the concession of that measure of freedom which is the right of every Christian scholar. They honor the venerable Confessions of past ages, but they place the Bible above the Confessions, and hold themselves bound, by their loyalty to Christ and to His Church, to follow the truth whithersoever it may lead them.

We assert and must insist upon the liberty exercised by the Reformers and by the early Church, to discuss the Scriptures freely and reverently and to avail ourselves of all the light which may be thrown upon them from any source. It is in the interest of God's truth to set forth Scripture *as it is*, and not to expose its friends and teachers to humiliation and defeat by claiming for it what cannot be substantiated. In the words of Ullmann, "Not *fixedness* nor *revolution*, but *evolution* and *reform*, is the motto for our times." We maintain that human conceptions of the Bible and of its inspired teachings are subject to revision. To grasp the results of deeper research, and to apply them with caution, reverence, and boldness to the examination of Scripture is not only our *privilege*, it is our solemn *duty* in the discharge of the sacred trust committed to us by Christ and His Church. More light is yet to break from God's Word. We would be found ever upon the watch-towers to catch and to transmit its rays. No theological school can take any other attitude without neglecting its duty to the present age and losing its hold upon the rising generation of Biblical students. That such a method may dissipate or modify certain traditional views as to the origin or date of the Books of Scripture ; that it may expose and correct certain long-established

errors of interpretation; that it may modify certain theological dogmas, is only what is to be expected from similar results in the past. But we have no fear for the Bible. The Word of God will come forth from the fire of reverent criticism as fine gold, with a new accretion of testimony to its divine origin, and a new power of appeal to the world.

(Signed),

Thomas S. Hastings (*President*),
Philip Schaff,
George L. Prentiss,
Marvin R. Vincent.

(Professor Francis Brown is at Oxford, superintending the publication of his Hebrew Lexicon.)

THE AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

UNION SEMINARY AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

A CHAPTER SUPPLEMENTARY TO "FIFTY YEARS OF THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

BY

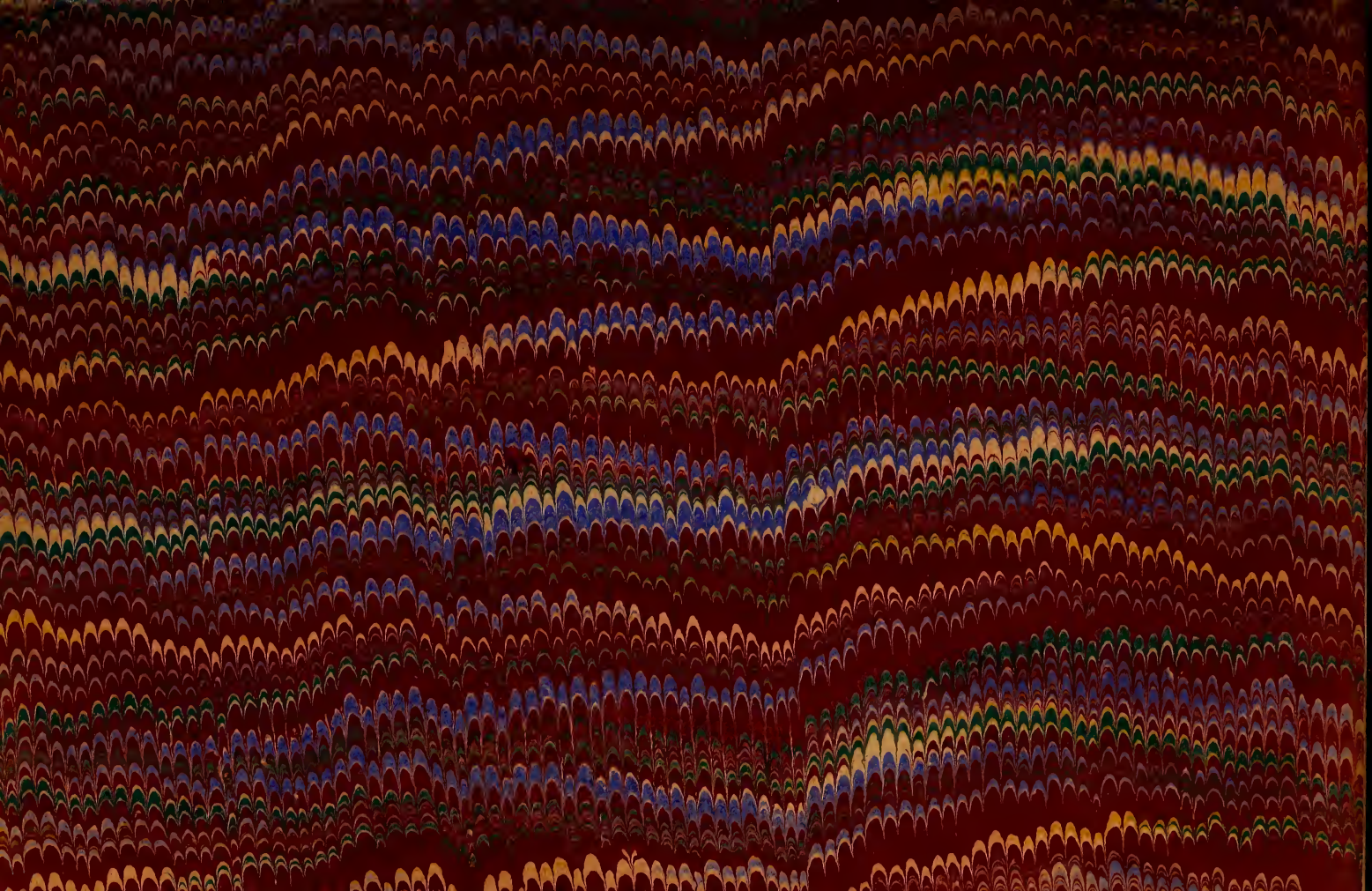
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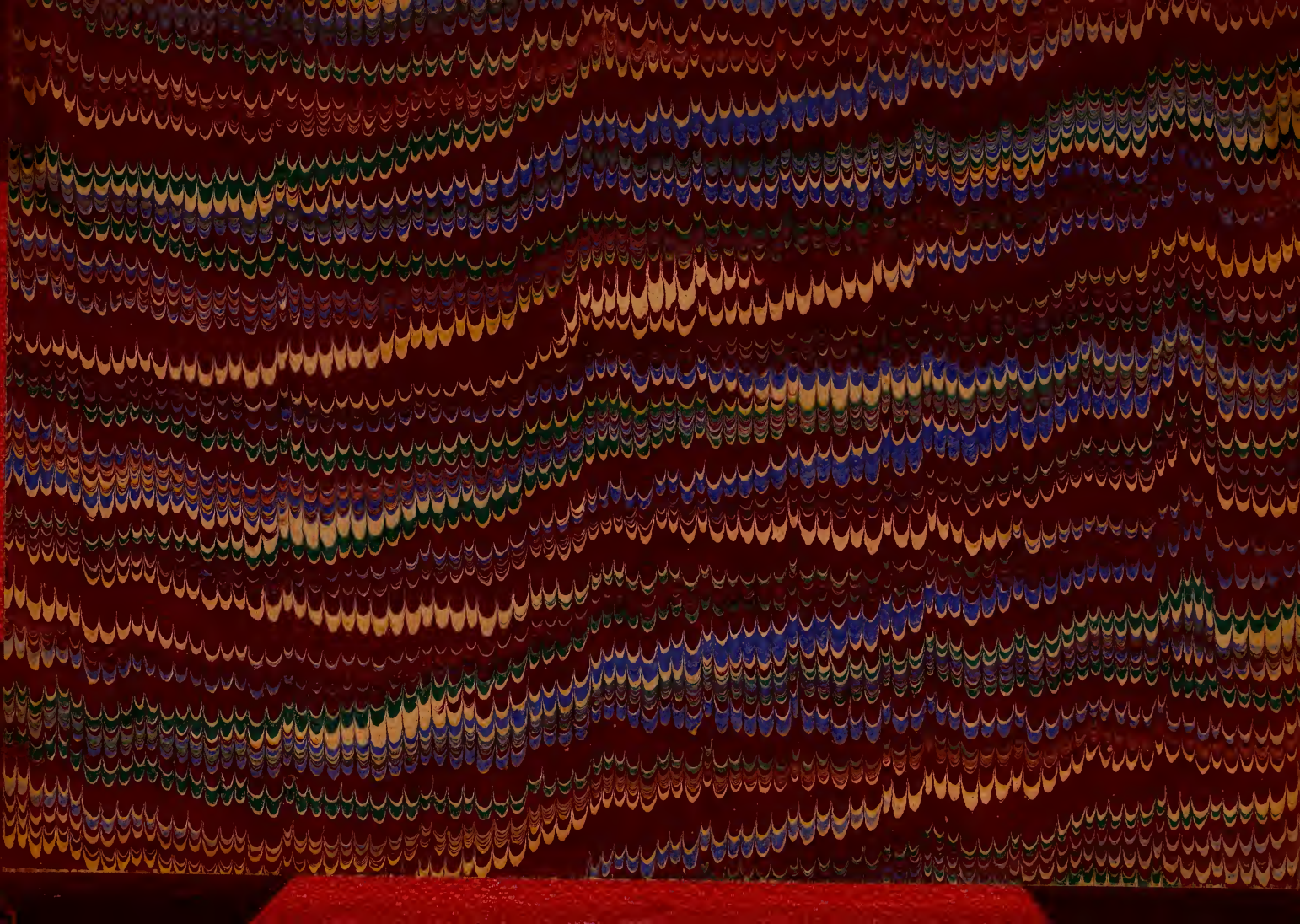
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